Hafa Adai!

Triple J presents gifts to Tinian *man'amko*, ETC checks. PAGE 2

Last day to apply for PUA and FPUC is Dec. 26. PAGE 11

75¢

Saipan Tribune

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CHCC bats for getting all vaccines at once

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Speaking to business leaders at the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's membership meeting yesterday at the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Saipan, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief operating officer Subroto Banerji said that they are trying to avail as many vaccines that the CNMI can store.

See CHCC on Page 4

Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief operating officer Subroto Banerji speaks at the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's membership meeting yesterday at the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Saipan. BEA CABRERA

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Dec. 2, 2020

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	6,852	68	6,920
Recovered	5,817	188	6,005
Active	735	68	803
Deaths	112	0	112
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			85,864

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	106	0	106
Traced via Travel Screening	80	0	80
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			22,633*
Days since last community transmission			107

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases. The CHCC COVID-19 dashboard will be undergoing maintenance until further notice.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

Barr: No widespread election fraud

By MICHAEL BALSAMO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—Disputing President Donald Trump's persistent, baseless claims, Attorney General William Barr declared Tuesday the U.S. Justice Department has uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could change the outcome of the 2020 election.

Barr

Barr's comments, in an interview with the The Associated Press, contradict the concerted effort by Trump, his boss, to subvert the results of last month's voting and block President-elect Joe Biden from taking his place in the White House.

Barr told the AP that U.S. attorneys and FBI agents have been working to follow up specific complaints and information they've received, but

See BARR on Page 4

WET WEATHER

A car passing through the highway in front of the Bank of Guam branch in Chalan Piao creates a wave of water from the roadside puddle created by yesterday's strong rain. Heavy showers are expected on Rota until Friday, with the potential for flash flooding. A flash flood watch is in effect on Rota through late Thursday night.

Story on Page 6

OPA finds PSS bank overdraft

» Audit found no material weaknesses, though

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Public School System's general fund at Bank of Guam had an ending balance of $2,372,912, but issued $3,965,193 in cumulative checks to payees in the fiscal

See OPA on Page 4

88 homestead lots on Pagan since 2017 but no one is eligible

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Lands has made available 88 agricultural homestead lots on Pagan since 2017, but no one has been eligible because of the law's one-year residen-

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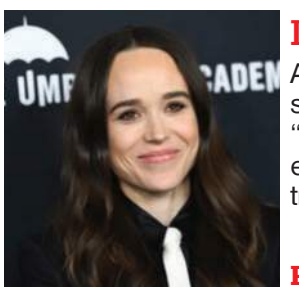
INSIDE

BUSINESS
James Deleon Guerrero will take over as vice president of long-running business JM Holdings.
PAGE 12

WORLD
The EU said it may need four more weeks to approve its first coronavirus vaccine.
PAGE 14



LIFE & STYLE
Actor Elliot Page, the star of "Juno" and "The Umbrella Academy," comes out as transgender.
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Local

Triple J Enterprises chairman and chief executive officer Robert Jones, right, presents gifts to the *man'amko* on Tinian and education tax credit donations to Tinian public schools.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Triple J presents gifts to Tinian *man'amko* and ETC checks

Triple J Enterprises recently presented gifts to the *man'amko* on Tinian and made education tax credit donations to Tinian public schools.

Triple J, led by its chairman and chief executive officer, Robert Jones, and vice president, Mike Sablan, presented Thanksgiving gift bags to the *man'amko* and education tax credit checks to Tinian Elementary School and Tinian Jr./Sr. High School last Nov. 25.

The presentations were attended by members of the Tinian leadership: Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan, Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider, Sen. Francisco Cruz, and Municipal Councilman Esteven King, as well as by representative-elect Patrick San Nicolas, and councilman-elect Joseph Santos.

The presentation of gifts took place in the newly-renovated Triple J building that will serve as a mini-hotel, restaurant, and car rental facility on Tinian.

In a short message prior to the presentation of gifts, Jones shared his excitement to be extending his business on Tinian. Aldan then extended appreciation to Triple J for their thoughtfulness and generous donations to the Tinian community.

The *man'amko* from the Aging Center were present to receive their gift bags in person. Triple J put together 60 gift bags of fruits and other food items for the *man'amko* present that day and for those who are homebound, which were delivered to them later that day.

In addition to the Thanksgiving gift bags for the *man'amko*, Triple J also presented $4,000 worth of education tax credit donations to Tinian Board of Education member Antonio L. Borja, Tinian Elementary School principal Lou Connie Manglona, and Tinian Jr./Sr. High School principal Dionne Santos. Both public schools serve the majority of students on Tinian.

In closing, Jones introduced his three new local Tinian staff who were hired by Triple J in preparation for the opening of new businesses on the island. He also expressed gratitude for being able to expand his business to serve the Tinian community. Aldan likewise extended his appreciation, on behalf of the Tinian leadership and community, for the generosity that Triple J gave the community to kick-start the holidays.

Aldan also shares in the excitement of Triple J's expansion to Tinian and the Tinian community seems just as ready for the opening of Triple J's businesses on Tinian.

"Just the [Christmas] lights alone [at the Triple J building] show that Triple J is vested in our community and its people. It hasn't even opened its doors to make money yet, but it is already spending money to share the Christmas spirit with our people," said one community member. ***(PR)***

NMTI board of directors reconvened

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute's board of directors met yesterday at the NMTI facility in Lower Base, after getting a clarification that they are still the governing board of the trade school.

NMTI board chair John Gonzales said that, pursuant to the Office of the Attorney General's opinion, NMTI's board of trustees cannot organize until the committee of transition submits its report to the current board of directors, so the current members can review, adopt, and transmit the report to the board of trustees.

The NMTI committee of transition will meet today, Dec. 3, at the Hyatt Regency Saipan in Garapan at 10am, to review and adopt the report of transition. After the committee of transition reviews and adopts the reports they will then present it to the board of directors next Wednesday at their board meeting.

When they submit the report to the board of trustees, the board of trustees will then transmit them to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and the Legislature.

Prior to the reassembly of the board of directors, NMTI chief executive officer Agnes McPhetres said, "He [Attorney General Edward Manibusan] said to me that Public Law 20-92 is still honoring the board of directors as the governance [body] of NMTI… until the report is completed and transmitted to the gover-

See NMTI on Page 4

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Senate passes bill increasing Commerce fees

The Senate on Tuesday unanimously passed on first and final reading a House of Representatives bill that will increase the fees of the Office of the Registrar of Corporations under the Department of Commerce.

All eight senators present voted for the passage of House Bill 21-19. Sen. Justo Quitugua was absent but was excused from the session.

Rep. Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero (R-Saipan) introduced the bill in February 2019. Similar legislation was introduced during the 15th, 16th, and 20th Legislature, but no actions were taken.

Guerrero said the fees have remained stagnant since the enactment of Executive Order 97-03 in 1998. Since then, there has been an immense influx of businesses into the Commonwealth, he added.

The proposed new fees are $150 for Articles of Organization; $150 for Articles of Incorporation; $250 for application for reinstatement following administrative dissolution; $250, application for certificate of authority for foreign corporation; $50, application for amended certificate of authority, among other several fees. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Program seeks to combat vet suicides

Nationwide, a total of 22 veterans commit suicide a day due to struggles of readjustment and subsequent behavioral issues. The suicide rate for veterans in Guam and the CNMI continues to be a major community concern. One suicide in this community is one too many.

To combat this, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs awarded Guam funding for a new program called, "Together with Veterans," a rural veteran suicide prevention program. TWV funding will develop suicide prevention training, resources, and materials.

The project has three priority areas and strategies: identify service members, veterans, and their families and screen for suicide risk; promote connectedness and improved care transitions; and increase lethal means and safety planning.

The TWV program committee competed the initial training and launch. Initial training involved a steering committee consisted of community stakeholders, 51% of which are veterans. There will be future meetings for the TWV to develop a needs assessment and action plan.

The TWV community facilitator is Guam Vet Center director Dr. Edward Santos, together with veteran advocate Tania Marie Mendiola, who was assigned the role of TWV community program coordinator.

TWV will extend this program to the CNMI.

For further information on the program or any questions, contact Santos 1 (671) 472-7161 or Mendiola at 1 (671) 998- 4924. ***(PR)***

BARR

From Page 1

"to date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election."

The comments, which drew immediate criticism from Trump attorneys, were especially notable coming from Barr, who has been one of the president's most ardent allies. Before the election, he had repeatedly raised the notion that mail-in voting could be especially vulnerable to fraud during the coronavirus pandemic as Americans feared going to polls and instead chose to vote by mail.

More to Trump's liking, Barr revealed in the AP interview that in October he had appointed U.S. Attorney John Durham as a special counsel, giving the prosecutor the authority to continue to investigate the origins of the Trump-Russia probe after Biden takes over and making it difficult to fire him. Biden hasn't said what he might do with the investigation, and his transition team didn't comment Tuesday.

Trump has long railed against the investigation into whether his 2016 campaign was coordinating with Russia, but he and Republican allies had hoped the results would be delivered before the 2020 election and would help sway voters. So far, there has been only one criminal case, a guilty plea from a former FBI lawyer to a single false statement charge.

Under federal regulations, a special counsel can be fired only by the attorney general and for specific reasons such as misconduct, dereliction of duty or conflict of interest. An attorney general must document such reasons in writing.

Barr went to the White House Tuesday for a previously scheduled meeting that lasted about three hours.

Trump didn't directly comment on the attorney general's remarks on the election. But his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani and his political campaign issued a scathing statement claiming that, "with all due respect to the Attorney General, there hasn't been any semblance" of an investigation into the president's complaints.

PAGAN

From Page 1

cy requirement, according to DPL Secretary Marianne Concepcion-Teregeyo.

On Tuesday, Concepcion-Teregeyo asked House Committee on Natural Resources chair Rep. Antonio SN. Borja (R-Tinian) and Senate Resources, Economic Development and Programs chair Sen. Francisco M. Borja (R-Tinian) to consider a pending bill that will amend the law to remove the one-year residency requirement so that eligible applicants may be qualified to receive the first agricultural homesteads on Pagan.

» DPL secretary asks Legislature to pass amendment so they can start distributing lots

In her letter to the Borjas, Concepcion-Teregeyo said if Public Law 16-50 is not amended, nobody will qualify for the 88 lots that DPL is making available on the island due to the residency requirement.

She asked both legislative committees to consider House Bill 21-43 in the form of HD3, HS1, that would amend part of Public Law 16-50 to provide eligibility for applicants interested in the village and agricultural homesteads in the Northern Islands.

She said DPL's Homestead Division director Irene Torres has communicated with House Natural Resources Committee vice chair Rep. Joel Camacho (R-Saipan) often and, along the way, DPL has prodded the Legislature on the status of HB 21-43, HD3, HS1. The bill will amend the law to provide proper eligibility for people who wish to avail of the village and agricultural homesteading programs under DPL.

Camacho introduced House Bill 21-43 in April 2019 to the full body of the House and its was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, which then made amendments to the bill and passed it in committee on June 11, 2019, in the form of House Draft 1. Camacho then introduced House Bill 21-43, HD1 on June 24, 2019, to the full House but it was recommitted back to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

Then-acting DPL secretary Irene T. Torres in May 2019 told Borja that, to date, DPL has only received one application for agricultural homestead in the Northern Islands since many interested Northern Islands descendants were ineligible due to P.L. 16-50. Torres said H.B. 21-43 would encourage former NI residents and their adult children to apply for village and agricultural homesteads. She said the bill will boost the resettlement of the Northern Islands, especially Pagan.

H.B. 21-43 provides that an applicant must be currently residing or have resided in the NI and must be born on or is a descendant of someone on the NNI and/or must be eligible to vote in NI elections.

Torres said the Legislature needs to specify in the bill, among other things, the minimum number of days that an applicant has been or have resided in order to establish legal residence.

HB 21-43 in the form of House Draft 2 proposes to remove language that may be considered discriminatory for people who wish to avail of such homesteads in the NI, as well as to include the requirement that all intended applicants must have resided in the NI for at least 45 days prior to applying.

In March 2019, then chief solicitor Charles E. Brasington issued an opinion, stating that the Commonwealth Code and the DPL's Regulations prohibit DPL from issuing a homestead to an individual who does not meet the eligibility criteria.

Brasington said DPL has promulgated regulations that clearly require an individual to live in the NI for an entire year before being eligible for an agricultural homestead.

"No one meets the eligibility criteria. As such, there is no one that Department of Public Lands can grant a permit to," he said.

The Commonwealth Code, Brasington said, prevents DPL from deviating from the one-year residence requirement.

Attorney General Edward Manibusan concurred with the chief solicitor's opinion.

According to the Commonwealth Election Commission last month, there were six voters on Agrigan, one on Pagan, and three on Alamagan. CEC managed to get seven votes from the three islands.

CEC said the total number of voters in NI is 162, but most of them are currently residing on Saipan.

CHCC

From Page 1

"In the CNMI we are getting ready to support vaccination for all in the community and it is our goal and that of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and the rest of the COVID-19 Task Force to make sure every resident of the CNMI is able to receive the vaccine," he said.

The plan is very similar for all the states and territories but the CNMI's is a little bit different, Banerji said, because the CNMI is pushing to get as much vaccines that the Commonwealth can store "so that we can be ready to vaccinate at our schedule."

"As you all of you know, we can't get out things here overnight. …We are not California, Maryland, Florida, etc., where you can get things overnight and so we have been strategically looking at the numbers that we can get vaccinated in different stages," he added.

Right now, there are three vaccine options—Pfizer, Moderna, and AstraZeneca—that are trying to secure Emergency Use Authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. That EUA will reportedly happen in the next few days.

Banrji said the vaccine comes in two shots: some are 28 days apart and others are 21 days apart. "We have started planning months in advance." That has resulted in the arrival of 10 freezers that will be used to store the vaccines on Saipan, Tinian and Rota, he said.

Based on the proposal of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there will be three phases of vaccination and "it's up to us to model our program toward that plan," he said.

The first phase involves 15,000 people identified as health care workers and frontline responders. CHCC is expecting to receive the Pfizer vaccines hopefully in the next two to three weeks.

The second phase refers to individuals that are front-line responders but may have not been included in the first group. Based on the availability of the vaccines, that group will start being offered vaccination around mid-January to end of January.

The third phase will move to the rest of the population.

"We are hoping that, by then, probably going into early March, vaccines will also include the children. … Some vaccines, though, are available or have come out of clinical trials in a population of under 18. … Pfizer has just started their trial in enrolling children ages 12 to 18 so we are hoping to get that data soon," Banerji said.

According to him, they are looking at ramping up vaccinations by setting up operations at the airport, similar with what CHCC did with the mass testing setup. "We are starting a goal of 400 to 500 vaccinations a day because we want to make sure that we can get through the population as quickly as possible and be able to start that second shot time clock right away. The longer we take the first step (first vaccine) the longer it will take us to the second step (second shot)," he said.

"We are going to do a focus group and a survey because we want to hear from the community so that we are able to go beyond the 70% [target] that the federal government is hoping that we would get. The 70% that we have been hearing about is [intended] to establish 'herd immunity.' That means a wider group of individuals are protected. We would like to challenge the CNMI…to aim greater than 90%. …We feel it's possible because of the island structure, our connections between our communities," he added.

OPA

From Page 1

year that ended on Sept. 30, 2019, according to an independent audit, resulting in a negative book balance of $1,631,548.

This was among the findings of the audit report by Burger & Comer P.C. that was released by the Office of the Public Auditor yesterday. OPA hired Burger and Comer to audit PSS' financial statement, internal control, and compliance for the year that ended Sept. 30, 2019.

The auditor said PSS did not have sufficient cash balances to cover all the checks written and released before Sept. 30, 2019.

The auditor found out that this happened because PSS prepared and issued checks—despite not having adequate funds to cover those checks—because they were assured by the CNMI Department of Finance that funding would be provided shortly after the end of the fiscal year.

Comer & Burger said the effect of PSS' action caused the financial statement to show a significant bank overdraft. The auditor said PSS ran the risk of issuing checks that would not be honored by its bank.

OPA recommended that PSS should not release checks if there is insufficient cash to cover those checks. The auditor said that PSS' Finance Department should verify that there is sufficient funds before releasing the checks.

With respect to prior year audit findings, the OPA auditor found that PSS resolved many questioned costs and issues.

On travel advance liquidation, Comer & Burger said a test on PSS' compliance with travel and commuting policies showed that 62 travel authorizations (about 61%) were not liquidated within the prescribed period. This happened, the auditor said, because of the lack of adherence to policies and procedures regarding the liquidation of travel advances. This had the effect of understating PSS expenses.

Comer & Burger said if the travel is covered by a federal grant, unliquidated travel advances means that PSS has not submitted the expense for reimbursement and therefore has not collected money from the grantor for such travel.

The auditor recommended that PSS should consider including as taxable compensation the travel advances issued to travelers who did not liquidate on time. That way, travelers might be enticed to liquidate their advances on time, the auditor said. Comer & Burger also recommended that PSS comply with its policies and procedures and regulations regarding travel advances.

The auditor said they did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls over compliance that could be considered material weaknesses. However, the auditor said, they did identify certain deficiencies that may be considered "significant deficiencies." The release of checks and the advance travel were among the five items that Burger & Comer found to be significant deficiencies.

The auditor's opinion is that PSS complied, in all material respects, with the types of compliance requirements that could have a direct and material effect on each of its major federal programs for the year ended Sept. 30, 2019.

The auditor determined that PSS' financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of PSS, as of Sept. 30, 2019, and the changes in financial position for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles.

NMTI

From Page 2

nor, and the leadership in the House and Senate, so it means that the board of directors is really governing the institution," said McPhetres.

With this, McPhetres said that she and her staff are relieved to finally see a clearer picture of where they stand.

In a previous article on *Saipan Tribune*, the NMTI board of directors agreed unanimously last Jan. 3 to move forward with the motion to dissolve the board of directors to make room for the board of trustees pursuant to the law that recognized NMTI as a government institution.

Two members of the outgoing board that transitioned into the board of trustees are Richard P. Kautz Jr. and Mario Valentino. The outgoing board members who will not make the transition into the board of trustees are John Gonzales, Annie G. Hayes, and Joseph Torres.

The new board of trustees that was established last March 12 is composed of Irene Holl, Carmelita Faisao, Ray Pangelinan, Richard P. Kautz Jr., Mario Valentino, Catherine Attao, and Deron Mendiola.

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Coast Guard adds info about rescue of 2 missing fishermen

The crew of the Coast Guard cutter *Myrtle Hazard* rescued two fishermen aboard a 21-foot fishing vessel 128-miles west of Tinian last Dec. 1, 2020. The fishermen were located during a search involving the Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force, Department of Public Safety, and volunteer vessels.

U.S. COAST GUARD

SANTA RITA, Guam—The crew of the Coast Guard cutter *Myrtle Hazard* rescued two fishermen aboard a 21-foot fishing vessel 128-miles west off Tinian last Tuesday.

The fishermen, missing since Thanksgiving morning, were located during a search involving the U.S. Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force, Department of Public Safety, and volunteer vessels. Both fishermen were reported to be in good health.

"I'm very happy we were able to return two members of the [CNMI] community to their families during this holiday season," said Capt. Christopher Chase, commander, Coast Guard Sector Guam. "I would like to thank our interagency partners for their diligence and commitment to the search and rescue mission."

On Nov. 26, the Sector Guam Command Center received a report from Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment Saipan stating the fishing vessel was overdue. Sector Guam watchstanders issued an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast notice to mariners, arranged for air support from Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point, and coordinated the search with local and federal partners.

Sector Guam watchstanders also diverted the Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* at the end of its 10,000 mile transit to its new homeport in Guam, to assist.

Involved in the four-day search were Coast Guard Sector Guam; Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules; a Navy Command, Task Force 72 P-8 Poseidon; Navy Helicopter Strike Squadron 25; Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry;* Coast Guard cutter *Myrtle Hazard;* CNMI Department of Public Safety; CNMI Homeland Security Emergency Operations Center; Good Samaritans aboard two commercial vessels; and Coast Guard Joint Rescue Coordination Center Honolulu.

On Nov. 30, a Navy Poseidon aircrew from Japan was on the second leg of a search pattern provided by Sector Guam when they located the missing fishing vessel 128 miles west of Tinian. The Poseidon crew then vectored in the crew of the *Myrtle Hazard* to conduct the rescue. Once on scene, the crew of the *Myrtle Hazard* transferred the two fishermen from their boat, verified their health, and gave them food and water.

"This case highlights the importance of telling someone where you will be on the water and when you will be expected to return—otherwise known as filing a 'float plan,'" said Chase. "Having the required safety equipment such as life jackets and flares is also critical. Devices such as an Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacon, available at most marine stores, make great gifts and can pinpoint a distressed mariner's position within a few meters."

Example float plans and required and recommended boating safety equipment are available on the free Coast Guard application (available for both iOS and Android devices) or by calling the nearest Coast Guard unit. ***(USCG)***

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*All benefits should be used during stay duration checked-in times only
*Facilities and benefits are for the use of registered guests only
*Valid CNMI or Guam resident ID required for special promotional rates

Flash flood watch on Rota; rip current risk until Friday

Heavy showers are expected on Rota until Friday, with the potential for flash flooding. A flash flood watch is in effect on Rota through late Thursday night.

Meanwhile, the high surf advisory for the CNMI is cancelled but a high rip current risk remains in effect through Friday.

Based on information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center-State Warning Point, a broad trade-wind trough enhanced by surging trades will bring sporadic heavy showers and strong thunderstorms to Rota.

A trade wind disturbance located to the southeast of the Marianas is expected to track across the southern Marianas as it brings heavy showers. Rainfall amounts of 3 to 5 inches with locally heavier amounts is possible. Heaviest showers are expected on Thursday night.

A flash flood watch means that conditions may develop that lead to flash flooding. Flash flooding is a very dangerous situation. Rota residents are advised to be mindful of the precautionary/preparedness actions and to stay informed on the latest statements and advisories, which will be available through local media sources or call the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at 237-8000 or 664-8000.

In related news, according to the NWS, dangerous rip currents in east facing reefs of the Mariana Islands are expected until Friday.

Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. Residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are advised to avoid venturing near reef lines facing east. Large breaking waves can knock you down and cause serious injuries. Very strong rip currents will be life-threatening. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don`t swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

Pena House signs on as NMC ProaPerks Partner

Pena House Boutique is now a proud NMC ProaPerks partner. All card-carrying members of the ProaPerks program can now get 10% off clothing and shoes.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pena House Boutique is the latest company to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks Partner, joining many other businesses and organizations that provide exclusive discounts and benefits for NMC students, employees, and alumni.

All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now avail of 10% discount when shopping for clothing and shoes at Pena House Boutique.

The boutique joins the growing list of ProaPerks partners such as 4EVER CNMI, Alamo Car Rental, All Star Sporting Goods, Athlete's Foot, Boarderline, Bubba Gump, Caravan of Food, Casa Urashima, Docomo Pacific, Dollar Days (Garapan), Enterprise Car Rental, Ete Cafe, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods, Garapan Restaurant, Great Harvest, Kiki's, National Car Rental, Natural Nail & Spa, NMC Bookstore, Latte Built, Saipan Computer Services, Salty's, Surf Club, Shirley's Coffee Shop, Tribe Marianas, Triple J Motors, and The Pacific Supply.

NMC is in the introductory phase of rolling out the ProaPerks to alumni, students, and employees. For more information, visit marianas.edu/proaperks. Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include NMC alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

Northern Marianas College

PRESIDENT

The Northern Marianas College is currently accepting applications for the position of President. The President of the Northern Marianas College serves as the chief executive officer for the Board of Regents and oversees a multi-campus college system located in three separate islands (Saipan, main campus; Rota Center and Tinian Center). The President will report to the Board of Regents and is expected to carry out the mission of the College:

The mission of the Northern Marianas College, through its commitment to student learning, provides high quality, affordable and accessible educational programs and services for the individual and people of the Commonwealth. The College serves as the engine to drive the economic growth and the social and cultural vitality of the Commonwealth.

Minimum Qualifications

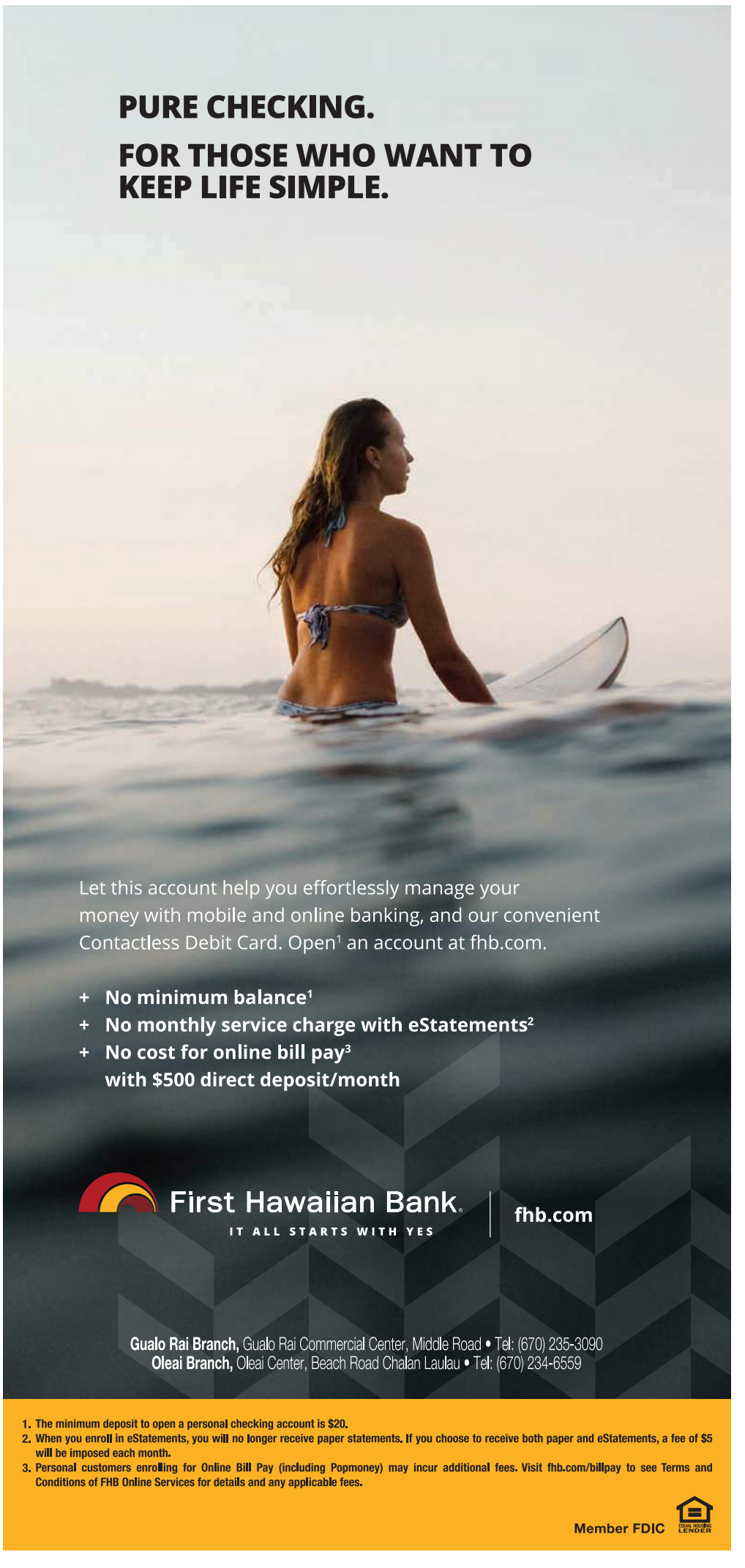
- A Master's degree from a U.S. accredited university or foreign equivalent. A doctorate degree is preferred;
- At least seven (7) years of executive level management in an institution of higher education of which five (5) years are continuous, **or** a combination of at least seven (7) years of executive level management including, secondary and post-secondary education teaching experience;
- Experience working in a multicultural environment, preferably in the Pacific region and in the Northern Mariana Islands;
- Substantiated experience in accreditation processes, personnel management, budget development and presentation, strategic planning and institutional assessment, fundraising, mediation, and team building; and
- Demonstrated knowledge of federal programs and grants application to higher education.

The salary for the position is $100,000 per annum plus benefits. Applications will be reviewed after the thirty-day announcement. Applicants with non-U.S. degrees are responsible for providing an official evaluation of their degrees to determine U.S. equivalency.

Applicants should include a curriculum vitae indicating their competences in Organizational Strategy, Resource Management, Communication, Collaboration, College Advocacy, and Professionalism; official transcripts; list of publications or scholarly research; three personal and three professional references (complete with name, title, address, phone/email contact); and four letters of professional recommendations specific to this position.

Applicants can submit completed application packages and documents electronically by submitting them to PSC.Chairman@marianas.edu. Applications can also be submitted by **certified priority mail** and must be received by the closing date of **December 21, 2020** to:

Charles V. Cepeda
Chairperson, Presidential Search Committee
Northern Marianas College
Attention: Human Resources Office
P.O. Box 501250
Saipan, MP 96950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3. Personal customers enrolling for Online Bill Pay (including Popmoney) may incur additional fees. Visit fhb.com/billpay to see Terms and Conditions of FHB Online Services for details and any applicable fees.
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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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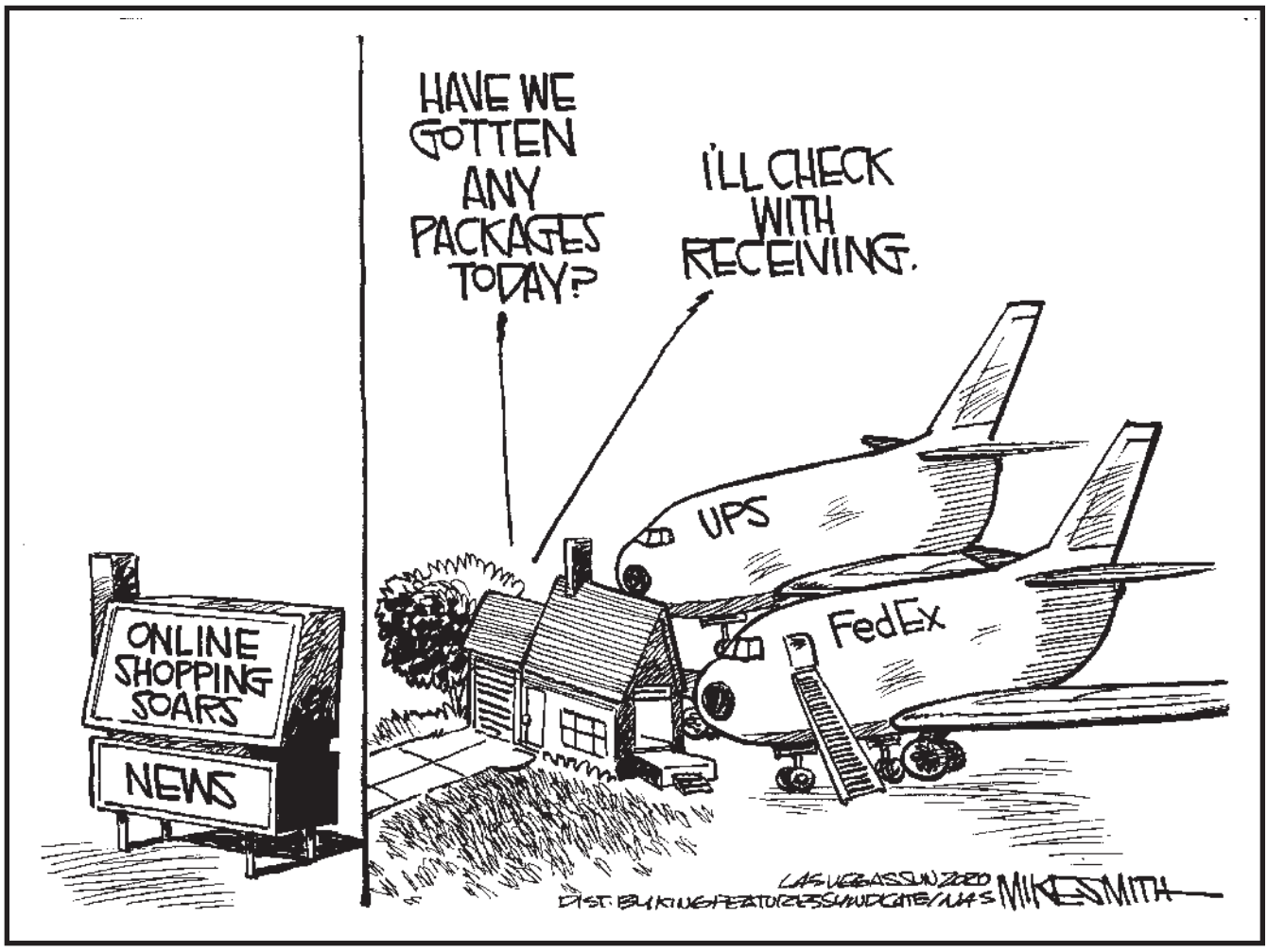
Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
editor@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association



EDITORIAL

After 19 years, bring troops in Afghanistan home

Given President Donald Trump's habit of making weighty decisions based on whims, the national security establishment's pushback against his plan to bring home 2,000 of the 4,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan and 500 of the 3,000 in Iraq by Jan. 15 is understandable. A speedy drawdown of troops in such unstable areas may seem as dumb and dangerous as the president's recent rash talk of bombing Iran on his way out the door. For one thing, Trump should leave massive foreign policy changes for when President-elect Joe Biden is sworn in. For another, Trump should be far more focused on the war against

National security adviser Robert O'Brien talks to reporters outside the West Wing of the White House in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 17, 2020. YURI GRIPAS/ABACA PRESS/TNS

COVID-19 at home. That said, Biden—who should also be focused like a laser on the virus—must examine the case for the Afghan pullout.

Given the larger political picture in the Mideast, the U.S. presence in Iraq is tricky and freighted. But when Trump tweeted in October that it was past time that all of the U.S. troops in Afghanistan came home, he was right. There is no longer any justification for a nearly two-decade-old conventional war that has left more than 2,300 Americans dead and 20,000 injured while costing $2 trillion-plus.

The original rationale for the U.S. launching its war in October 2001 was that the Taliban, the militant tribe that controlled much of Afghanistan, had allowed Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terror group to be based there for years as it prepared to launch the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, on the United States. Within weeks, the vastly superior U.S. military had control of much of the nation and had begun to try to establish a civilian regime.

Then-President George W. Bush knew the risks of a quagmire. In the 19th century, the British empire tried twice to sublimate the remote, landlocked nation before giving up. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded, and Soviet troops left a decade later, unable to set up a stable, Moscow-friendly government. Who else could not set up a stable Afghan government? The 14 tribes who populate the deeply impoverished nation. It took extraordinary naivete for Bush to think the U.S. could

See TROOPS on Next Page

The US is falling behind in science and engineering. Here are 3 ways to catch up

By GREG DOUQUET and PETER L. LEVIN
THE BALTIMORE SUN

In January of this year the National Science Board, which is part of the National Science Foundation, published its biennial report on Science and Engineering Indicators. It captures how the United States compares to other countries from the perspective of degree production, investments in research and development, and scientific articles and patents (as a proxy for technical prowess). Basically, we're falling behind on every major measure, which means we may not have enough trained people and core competencies to combat climate change, defeat contagious viruses or compete in the growing market for advanced energy systems.

This is a dangerous signal.

Not only have we closed the borders (even to students) and raised the walls (literally and figuratively) to shared knowledge, we have diluted educational achievement standards at home and outsourced our critical manufacturing capabilities overseas. Turning the tide will require new educational policy, targeted federal funding and visionary executive leadership. Investment in science reveals verifiable facts that we use to live longer, happier, more-affordable lives. It also leads to products and services that we can sell in foreign markets. The only "alternative fact" that matters is that China is eager to assume any mantle we abandon or neglect.

There's no better example of where misbegotten technology policy has hurt us than the energy sector. The U.S. should be leading in every topic from reducing greenhouse gas emissions to clean electricity generation. China today has almost three times our renewable generative capacity; in 2019 a quarter of their net-new capacity was solar.

One example of where science-based decisions could better inform our energy policy are small modular nuclear reactors, or SMRs. Many people immediately reject nuclear power as a viable energy option because of two false perceptions: that it is fundamentally unsafe and that there is no good way to dispense with spent radioactive fuel. However, even well-respected former anti-nuclear advocates, like Michael Schellenberger, have changed their minds on this. Electricity from nuclear plants can be created safely, affordably and without turning radioactive material into weapons.

Another example is hydrogen-based fuel cells, which produce electricity in a way that exhausts only water and heat. The global market is still relatively small, only about $5 billion today, but one analyst believes it could grow to $40 billion in six years; another believes that in 2032 over 5 million hydrogen-fueled cars will be sold worldwide, worth over $250 billion. Almost every major foreign manufacturer has scaled a fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) to production, but the U.S. is virtually invisible in the market. Unwisely retreating from FCEVs unnecessarily limits the U.S. from competing in advanced energy manufacturing and transportation.

There are three decisions we can make that would put the U.S. on proper footing.

First, we need to agree that voluntarily relinquishing technological leadership is going to severely hurt our economy and our global political influence. Pushing a coal-based agenda or ripping up environmental regulations is not going to make us cleaner, healthier, more productive or more employable. The last Quadrennial Energy Review predicted that 1.5 million new jobs will be created in the energy sector between 2016 and 2030; in fact, according to the 2020 US Energy and Employment Report, there were 54,000 net new jobs in just energy efficiency alone.

Second, we need to get serious about exposing our children to core concepts of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the so-called STEM curricula. Just because K-12 public education is typically a local or state issue doesn't mean that we can afford to live in regional isolation, where some school boards promote fundamental physics and others fundamentalist philosophy. Willful ignorance is not consistent with our values and freedoms.

Finally, we need leadership attention and actionable agenda on where and how to invest precious resources into research, technology transfer and export commercialization. And we need to make sure that the international playing field is safe, fair and level for everybody. That means constructive engagement with our partners, and clear and enforceable rules for our competitors. It means less bluster and polemic outrage, and more product demonstrations and value creation.

Greg Douquet is a former Marine Corps colonel, co-founder and managing partner of Red Duke Strategies LLC, and co-director of the Atlantic Council Global Energy Center's Veterans Advanced Energy Project. Peter L. Levin (pll@comentcore.net) is a co-founder and CEO of Amida Technology Solutions, and a senior adjunct fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Worship the state, or else

By CAL THOMAS
Tribune Content Agency

Readers may email Cal Thomas at tcaeditors@tribpub.com. Look for Cal Thomas' new book America's Expiration Date: The Fall of Empires and Superpowers and the Future of the United States *(HarperCollins/Zondervan).*

In totalitarian societies, governments suppress the church and religious worship. That's because dictators believe citizens should worship them as the highest authority and not a Higher Authority, which they view as a threat to their power and position.

In the United States, the threat to religious liberty has been under siege for some time. Last week's Thanksgiving gift to believers from the Supreme Court may be only a temporary reprieve from government's assault on faith and conscience. The narrow 5-4 ruling serves as a warning the threat is not over.

The court majority ruled that Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York overstepped his authority and the Constitution, when he arbitrarily declared that, during the COVID pandemic, worship services must be limited to a number he created out of whole cloth.

What is it that causes so many Americans to place their faith in government over faith in God, or even faith in themselves? False gods of wood, iron, bronze and gold could not answer the prayers of ancient peoples, so why, when government fails to answer the "prayers" of so many today, do people continue to put their faith in it?

When government sets itself up as the ultimate authority on all things, including the right to gather and worship freely, other liberties can quickly be at risk. If the First Amendment is to be challenged, even watered down when it comes to faith and practice, why not impose stricter controls on speech and the press, as is done in totalitarian states? Once the principle that government endows rights is established, it is a very short step for government to take them away.

In China and elsewhere around the globe, dictators view God as a challenge to their rule. They demand total fealty, or those who seek to go over their heads with appeals to Heaven must be arrested, jailed and in some instances murdered that the almighty state be preserved.

One of the founding principles that brought Pilgrims from England to America was the freedom to worship God as their consciences dictated. The Constitution guarantees that right. In more recent years the term "separation between church and state" penned by Thomas Jefferson in a private letter to a friend, has come to mean the right of the government to define the meaning of "church," restricting the practice of faith to one hour on Sunday morning and in the case of Gov. Cuomo and some other governors and mayors, dictating how many people can gather to worship Someone other than them.

A Wall Street Journal editorial commenting on the Court's decision got it right: "The Court explains that New York's order treats houses of worship more harshly than what Mr. Cuomo considers 'essential' businesses. Those include liquor stores, bike shops, acupuncturists, lawyers, accountants, and more."

Sermons I have heard over the years have noted that in the eyes of God when one has broken one of the Ten Commandments, one has broken them all. Breaking one law, they have noted, defines one as a lawbreaker.

It is a good analogy when considering our liberties. If one is threatened, all are potentially at risk. President-elect Joe Biden has promised to name more liberal judges to federal benches. If he succeeds, expect more challenges to religious freedom and other constitutional rights, including the right to life and the right to keep and bear arms. It is a major reason why the runoff election in Georgia next month must re-elect the two Republicans so that a Senate majority can block challenges by the new administration, not just to religious liberty, but to other freedoms as well.

Empathy as patriotism

By KEITH C. BURRIS
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Block Newspapers (kburris@post-gazette.com).

Barring the nearly but not wholly unimaginable (it has been a crazy year), or an act of God, Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. will be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States in a few short weeks.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 rages and so do the heathen—all of us, left, right and center. We are angry, jumpy and generally alienated from each other.

The presidency is an impossible job anyway—structurally, politically, symbolically—and ideally should be broken down into parts and pieces and delegated out.

But that isn't going to happen, at least not on the main stage.

Biden will face not just an impossible job but an angry and heartsick country.

We are not only divided, but we have lost faith, in the system and in each other.

Perhaps only Franklin Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln faced rougher seas.

One thing Biden has going for him is a practical and deep understanding of the office of the presidency and its operational as well as political complexities.

That's a very good thing. To the extent that it is possible, he will delegate and he will surround himself with competence.

With competence, unfortunately, often comes arrogance. Some of the folks around President Barack Obama were very smart. But as a friend of mine, a longtime Washington correspondent, told me years ago: In Washington, everyone is smart, just ask any one of them.

What is really needed is wariness and a measure of humility.

That's another good thing about Joe Biden: He does not think he is the smartest guy in the room.

As a creature of Congress, he will respect Congress, even when he is at odds with Republican senators, for, again, he understands Congress and its members.

But the best thing about Joe Biden, and I am far from the first to say so, is his empathy.

He has suffered, mightily, in his life. So he really does feel the pain of others. And he really does see all Americans as family—all of us bound to each other.

Thus, we are obliged to listen to each other and help each other.

If Obama was the Visionary-in-Chief and Ronald Reagan was the Great Communicator, Biden will be the Empathizer-in-Chief.

It sounds nice after a president who was a pit bull capable of much, but incapable of empathy.

But can it work? Can we progress under a Great Empathizer—Fred Rogers as the most powerful man in the world?

I am of two minds.

In an immediate and measurable way, mostly not.

Biden says he wants us to heal. I doubt the left or right are ready to try.

He wants an era of good feeling in Washington—on the Hill and between the parties. This will not happen on things like a Green New Deal. But it is possible on things like infrastructure and Social Security reform and maybe even immigration. It was always possible. Cooperation happens every day in Washington, on the lesser stages.

One key to Biden's success will be his Cabinet and sub-Cabinet. (And the first signs are comforting.) If he picks mostly old pros and pragmatists, a lot can get done. If he goes all woke and precious and tries to create another New Deal or Great Society, Washington's dysfunction will only deepen.

For we don't really need new programs and "answers" and initiatives and taxes. We need something far more important—something a president can help us achieve. We need a restoration of values, and faith in those values.

Here Biden can make a difference.

The model is not FDR, but Dwight Eisenhower.

Let us rest and renew ourselves.

Give us a break from politics and the presidency. Be the president, Joe Biden. But also let the country be.

If you travel the country's back roads as I just did for a few days, you see that America is still intact. Families still take care of each other, teachers still turn on the lightbulb in students' minds, people still hunt, and fish, and watch football, and cook, and work on old cars, and pray on their knees on Sundays.

We're actually OK. We just need to escape the blue and the red and the fulminating haters on TV and social media for a while.

The other model for Biden is Biden. Just be what you were during the campaign, sir—a national grandpa, who knows how government works and can forge a compromise, but, most of all, believes empathy equals patriotism.

Wearing a mask and social distancing, says Biden, are acts of civic piety—and brotherhood.

This kind of Biden presidency can succeed. Because the president is not, in the end, primarily the master legislator or reformer. He is the caretaker of the American ideal and the American ethos.

Biden did not really run on issues. He ran on restoring the nation's soul. He should stick with that—the theme that got him nominated and elected.

When he talks about the dignity of every American, reminds us that we can be adversaries without being enemies, and ends every speech with "May God protect our troops," he is edging us toward restoration.

A presidency based on American values, rediscovered and restored, is worth a try.

TROOPS

From Page 8

pull off this task.

President Barack Obama's national security team also knew of the difficulty of U.S. nation-building in Afghanistan when he took office in 2009. But Obama's fear of being portrayed as soft on foreign affairs actually led him to order the largest deployment in Afghanistan—topping 82,000 active-duty military in 2011. The justifications: the need to pressure the Taliban to accept civilian rule and to keep it from once again facilitating U.S.-hating jihadists.

The U.S. deployment has been sharply cut, but the Pentagon and the State Department still use these justifications years later. The first is bizarre. Why does the U.S. have a duty to impose its ideals on one of the least-receptive nations on Earth in a way that risks American lives and hammers taxpayers?

The second justification may have stood up in 2001, but not now. The U.S. military continues its information revolution, in which advanced technology keeps making it easier to identify and reduce or eliminate threats. Having a 97,000-ton aircraft carrier based in the Indian Ocean with a primary focus being on thwarting Afghan-based terror plots makes more sense than having U.S. troops be sitting ducks deployed near Afghan hot spots. The U.S. is effectively using surveillance and drone strikes to disrupt terrorists in Yemen—with no forces on the ground. It's time to do the same with Afghanistan.

And that's not wishful thinking. In 2009, then-Vice President Biden was the most prominent opponent of the Pentagon push for an Afghan troop build-up. He should again challenge the national security establishment. No troops should be in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2021, the 20th anniversary of the war's start. There is a safer way to keep the U.S. safe.

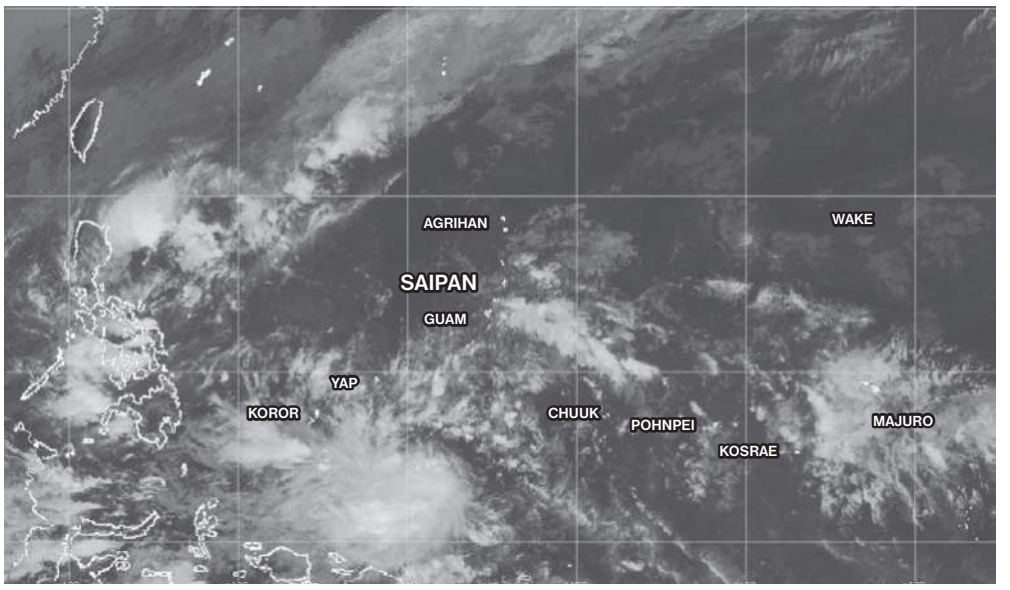
(c)2020 The San Diego Union-Tribune

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Cloudy with numerous showers and isolated thunderstorms. Southeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly sunny with isolated showers and thunderstorms. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers
87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 12:01 PM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Scattered showers moved into the region earlier than expected ahead of a developing disturbance. Gusty winds are possible as these showers move through the area.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	87° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:28 AM	5:45 PM
Friday	6:28 AM	5:45 PM
Saturday	6:29 AM	5:45 PM
Sunday	6:30 AM	5:45 PM
Monday	6:30 AM	5:46 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	8:40 AM	8:07 PM
Friday	-	9:32 AM	9:03 PM
Saturday	-	10:23 AM	9:59 PM
Sunday	-	11:11 AM	10:55 PM
Monday	-	1:57 AM	11:51 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Sunny	77° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	45° / 25°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	70° / 64°
Honolulu	Windy	77° / 66°
London	Cloudy	52° / 50°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	75° / 47°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	66° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 74°
New York	Rain	61° / 46°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	48° / 37°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	46° / 37°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	52° / 37°
Rome	Sunny	55° / 34°
Salem	Showers	74° / 44°
San Francisco	Sunny	61° / 45°
Seoul	Showers	43° / 27°
Tokyo	Sunny	52° / 36°
Washington, DC	Rain	60° / 44°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:11 AM	LOW TIDE	-0.46
10:28 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.67
3:52 PM	LOW TIDE	1.14
8:18 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.58

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1212	18:00	18:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Last day to apply for PUA and FPUC is Dec. 26

The CNMI Department of Labor is reminding the public that Dec. 26, 2020, is the last day it will be accepting applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation assistance.

Who can apply for PUA/ FPUC?

PUA and FPUC are available to citizens of the United States, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, the CNMI, Guam, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, American Samoa, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and qualified aliens who reside and work in the CNMI who became unemployed, unable to work, or not available to work as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Individuals who are self-employed, those seeking part-time employment, or individuals who were about to start a job but could not begin work because of COVID-19 are also eligible for PUA and FPUC.

A list of acceptable COVID-19 related reasons to qualify for PUA are as follows:

■ The individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis;

■ A member of the individual's household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;

■ The individual is providing care for a family member or a member of the individual's household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;

■ A child or other person in the household for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and such school or facility care is required for the individual to work;

■ The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;

■ The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because the individual has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;

■ The individual was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;

■ The individual has become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;

■ The individual has to quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19;

■ The individual's place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; or

■ The individual is an independent contractor who is unemployed (totally or partially) or is unable or unavailable to work because of the COVID-19 public health emergency has severely limited his or her ability to continue performing the customary job.

Individuals who wish to receive PUA benefits must provide proof of identity and demonstrate their status as U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or qualified aliens. This is irrespective of territory law eligibility criteria for regular unemployment benefits.

Qualified aliens include:

■ Legal permanent resident ("green card" holder)

■ An asylee, refugee, or an alien whose deportation is being withheld

■ Alien paroled into the U.S. for at least one year

■ Alien granted conditional entry (per law in effect prior to April 1, 1980)

■ Cuban/Haitian entrant

■ Aliens in the U.S. who have been abused, subject to battery or extreme cruelty by a spouse or other family/household member, or have been a victim of a severe form of human trafficking

■ Aliens whose children have been abused and alien children whose parent has been abused who fit certain criteria

Application filing dates

Individuals may apply for PUA if they have had a week(s) of unemployment on or after Feb. 2, 2020, through Dec. 26, 2020, as a result of COVID-19. PUA is available for individuals who have lost their jobs, had their regular work hours reduced, or were self-employed individuals but are no longer able to work as a direct result of COVID-19. Individuals may file applications for PUA from the date the first public CNMI DOL announcement, issued on June 10, 2020, through Dec. 26, 2020.

How and where to apply

Claimants may apply for PUA either online or in person. Submit a PUA application online at the following address: www.hiremarianas.com.

PUA applications and other forms may also be obtained and submitted at either of the following location(s):

SAIPAN:
CNMI Department of Labor
Division of Employment Services
Building # 1334, Ascencion Dr.
Capitol Hill, Saipan MP 96950

ROTA:
Sinapalo Youth Center
Sinapalo 1
Rota, MP 96951

TINIAN:
Edu's Plaza, 1st Floor
San Jose Village
Tinian, MP 96952

or
Tinian Public Library
San Jose Village
Tinian, MP 96952

General program inquiries

Individuals who have questions about the PUA/FPUC programs are encouraged to contact the CNMI DOL via email at info@puamarianas.com or call the following numbers between 8am and 4pm, Monday – Friday: 322-8870, 322-8872, 322-8874, 322-8877, 322-8879, 322-8871, 322-8873, 322-8876, 322-8878, 322-8880.

Required documents

To receive PUA, individuals must submit in-person or upload online the following:

■ A government issued picture identification (Driver's license, passport, alien registration card, etc.)

■ Social Security card number

■ If applicable, copies of the most recent federal income tax form(s), check stubs, and other proof of earnings

■ If applicable, evidence of self-employment earnings, business license, including financial documents such as 2017 federal/CNMI income tax forms, profit and loss statement, and proof of business loss due to the disaster.

Individuals must provide proof of identity and citizenship (U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or qualified alien) and proof that they are legally authorized to work in CNMI. If it is later discovered that an individual is not a qualified alien and/or is not authorized to work due to a false statement made by the individual, any PUA paid will be overpaid. PUA payments are not subject to any waiver provisions and, therefore, any overpayments established must be repaid in full.

Further information

Individuals who are determined eligible for PUA must file weekly claim certifications (to demonstrate their continued eligibility) either in person or online by using any of the filing methods described above. Individuals who file a PUA claim will receive information about their benefit rights and responsibilities. To remain eligible for PUA, individuals must continue to meet all eligibility requirements and conditions found in the *PUA/ FPUC Benefits Rights Information Handbook*. Continued eligibility is determined on a week-by-week basis.

Individuals who willfully conceal material facts or knowingly making false statement(s) to obtain PUA to which they are not entitled will be required to repay all benefits fraudulently collected and may be

Fraud hotline

Individuals are encouraged to call 670-989-9095 to report any perceived instances of wrongdoing or fraud pertaining to PUA/ FPUC. ***(PR)***

PIUI JOINS TOYS FOR TOTS

Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. partners up with the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College for the U.S. Marine Corp Reserve "Toys for Tots" program to provide an additional drop-off outlet this Christmas season. Each year, Pacifica Insurance kick starts their T4T boxes with an inhouse donation. The company invites the community to join them in putting smiles on children's faces this holiday season by donating some toys to this drive. PIUI is open Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm and is located at the Joeten Center in Susupe.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR A&E SERVICES
CUC-RAES-21-012

Engineering Consulting Services for CUC's Integrated Solar Photovoltaic Energy and Battery Storage Systems

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed RAES Proposals from qualified firms for engineering consultant services for CUC's solar photovoltaic and renewable energy systems in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The RAES package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RAES package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of the AES Proposal marked *"CUC-RAES-21-012, Engineering Consulting Services for CUC's Integrated Solar Photovoltaic Energy and Battery Storage Systems"*, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than December 30, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST).** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers who submit RAES Proposal determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from the RAES Proposal submitted by competing proposers.

All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the RAES requirements in the course of proposer's preparation of the RAES under the contract. The RAES does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the RAES under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RAES and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 15, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Anne Crockett, CUC Senior Electrical Engineer via email address anne.crocket@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, Administrative Technician Senior, via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all RAES Proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said RAES, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All RAES Proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Business

James Deleon Guerrero takes over JM Holdings

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

BEA CABRERA

James Deleon Guerrero is introduced by Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Velma Palacios as the new vice president of JM Holdings LLC at the SCC general membership meeting held at the grand ballroom of Hyatt Regency Saipan yesterday.

James Deleon Guerrero will take over as vice president of long-running local business JM Holdings LLC. A graduate of business management at Chaminade University in Honolulu, the 26-year-old came back to Saipan recently to help with the family business and re-establish himself to his roots and home.

According to Deleon Guerrero, his father Jesus Manuel "JM" V. Deleon Guerrero, instilled in him a strong business sense and foundation. "As a former managing director of Marianas Visitors Bureau, he cultivated in me to have interest to help the community, other businesses, and strengthening the economy…as an only child, I want to continue his legacy," he said.

"At JM Holdings LLC, we do a lot of real estate business, house rentals, land sales, longterm leases, commercial, agriculture and farming, landscaping projects, plant rentals, and design… my experience from my previous employer coupled with my education are a blessing and I want to use them here," he added.

Aside from a business management degree, Deleon Guerrero spent another four years taking up construction and engineering management. "That and the experience that I have garnered working in that industry has been very fruitful… My work included a lot of important tasks like providing and reviewing blueprints and drawings on any project that I will be working on and closing out projects," he said.

"All the study and experience I have will be of good use here. There will be big adjustments but I know I can adapt with the help and support of my family. These will be my tools in the business to continue the vision of my father," he added.

Deleon Guerrero said immediate goals is to use social media as a platform for the company. "I know how advantageous social media is to any business and I plan to put up a digital base where clients can easily reach us… part of the company's long-term goal is to really help the community. I didn't think that I was going to come back anytime soon, but here I am now… and I want to spend as much time with them (parents) and this is where I would rather be," he added.

For more information about JM Holdings LLC, contact (670) 234-6959, (670) 484-2333, (670) 234-2138, or send an email to jma-asoc@pticom.com or j.deleonguerrero94@gmail.com.

Unveiling economic team, Biden pledges, 'Help is on the way'

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP)—President-elect Joe Biden on Tuesday introduced top advisers he says will help his administration rebuild an economy hammered by the coronavirus pandemic, declaring, "I know times are tough, but I want you to know that help is on the way."

Biden said he'd chosen a "first-rate team" that is "tested and experienced" to tackle the country's economic crisis. He picked liberal advisers who have long prioritized the nation's workers and government efforts to address economic inequality.

Unemployment remains high as the COVID-19 outbreak widens the gulf between average people and the wealthiest Americans. The virus, which has claimed more than 269,000 lives nationwide, is resurgent across the country amid holiday travel and colder weather sending people indoors.

As he did frequently while campaigning, Biden promised that the U.S. would eventually emerge with an economy that is dramatically reshaped to better stamp out economic inequality.

"From the most unequal economic and job crisis in modern history, we can build a new American economy that works for all Americans, not just some," Biden said as he introduced his choices for some of the government's top economic posts during a speech at a theater in Wilmington, Delaware, where he has led his transition to the presidency.

Tuesday also marked the president-elect's first appearance since breaking two small bones in his right foot while playing with one of his dogs over the weekend. He wore a black walking boot and moved gingerly but tried to keep things light. As he emerged from his motorcade, Biden pointed to his boot and lifted his leg briefly to show it off.

Asked about his foot by reporters, Biden responded only, "Good, thanks for asking."

The injury, while not serious, again intensifies scrutiny on Biden's age, given that he just turned 78 and is the oldest president ever to be in his first term. Still, his team has tried to keep the focus on building out its government and upcoming policy challenges, chief among them the pandemic and the economy.

Biden repeatedly evoked his work as vice president when the Obama administration oversaw the economic recovery following the 2008 financial crisis, noting that many of those on his newly formed economic team worked closely with him then.

Most of his choices will require confirmation from the deeply divided Senate, where some top Republicans have already begun voicing opposition. Biden said he hopes "that we will be able to work across the aisle in good faith, move forward as one country."

Nation

US panel: 1st vaccines to health care workers, nursing homes

NEW YORK (AP)—Health care workers and nursing home residents should be at the front of the line when the first coronavirus vaccine shots become available, an influential government advisory panel said Tuesday.

The panel voted 13-1 to recommend those groups get priority in the first days of any coming vaccination program, when doses are expected to be very limited. The two groups encompass about 24 million people out of a U.S. population of about 330 million.

Later this month, the Food and Drug Administration will consider authorizing emergency use of two vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna. Current estimates project that no more than 20 million doses of each vaccine will be available by the end of 2020. And each product requires two doses. As a result, the shots will be rationed in the early stages.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices will meet again at some point to decide who should be next in line. Among the possibilities: teachers, police, firefighters and workers in other essential fields such as food production and transportation; the elderly; and people with underlying medical conditions.

Tuesday's action merely designated who should get shots first if a safe and effective vaccine becomes available. The panel did not endorse any particular vaccine. Panel members are waiting to hear FDA's evaluation and to see more safety and efficacy data before endorsing any particular product.

Experts say the vaccine will probably not become widely available in the U.S. until the spring.

The panel of outside scientific experts, created in 1964, makes recommendations to the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who almost always approves them. It normally has 15 voting members, but one seat is vacant.

The recommendations are not binding, but for decades they have been widely heeded by doctors, and they have determined the scope and funding of U.S. vaccination programs.

It will be up to state authorities whether to follow the guidance. It will also be left to them to make further, more detailed decisions if necessary—for example, whether to put emergency room doctors and nurses ahead of other health care workers if vaccine supplies are low.

The outbreak in the U.S. has killed nearly 270,000 people and caused more than 13.5 million confirmed infections, with deaths, hospitalizations and cases rocketing in recent weeks.

As the virtual meeting got underway, panel member Dr. Beth Bell of the University of Washington noted that on average, one person is dying of COVID-19 per minute in the U.S. right now, "so I guess we are acting none too soon."

About 3 million people are living in nursing homes, long-term chronic care hospitals, and other U.S. long-term care facilities. Those patients and the staff members who care for them have accounted for 6% of the nation's coronavirus cases and a staggering 39% of the deaths, CDC officials say.

Despite the heavy toll, some board members at Tuesday's meeting said they hesitated to include such patients in the first group getting shots.

Trump files lawsuit challenging Wisconsin election results

MADISON, Wis. (AP)—President Donald Trump filed a lawsuit Tuesday in Wisconsin seeking to disqualify more than 221,000 ballots in the state's two most Democratic counties, a longshot attempt to overturn Joe Biden's win in a battleground state he lost by nearly 20,700 votes.

Trump filed the day after Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and the chairwoman of the Wisconsin Elections Commission certified Biden as the winner of the state's 10 Electoral College votes. Trump asked the Wisconsin Supreme Court to take the case directly, rather than have it start in a lower court, and order Evers to withdraw the certification.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court gave Evers until 8:30 p.m. Tuesday to respond to the lawsuit, an unusually tight deadline that speaks to how quickly the court is likely to decide the case.

The state's highest court, controlled 4-3 by conservatives, also is considering whether to hear two other lawsuits filed by conservatives seeking to invalidate ballots cast during the presidential election. Separately, two Wisconsin Republicans filed a new federal lawsuit Tuesday that mirrors some of Trump's claims and asks a judge to declare him the winner in Wisconsin.

Trump's lawsuit repeats many claims he made during a recount of votes in Milwaukee and Dane counties that large swaths of absentee votes were illegally cast. Local officials rejected his claims during the recount, and Trump is challenging procedures that have been in place for years and never been found to be illegal.

Trump is not challenging any ballots cast in conservative counties he won.

Biden campaign spokesman Nate Evans called the lawsuit "completely baseless and not rooted in facts on the ground." Democratic Gov. Tony Evers said it was "without merit."

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul, a Democrat, noted that the lawsuit doesn't allege that anyone was ineligible to vote, but instead seeks to create a two-tiered election system where voters in Dane and Milwaukee counties are disenfranchised "under much stricter rules than citizens in the rest of the state."

Trump's Wisconsin attorney, Jim Troupis, said in a statement that voters "deserve election processes with uniform enforcement of the law, plain and simple."

Similar Trump campaign lawsuits have failed in other battleground states.

In Phoenix, a judge has scheduled a Thursday trial in Arizona GOP Chairwoman Kelli Ward's lawsuit that seeks to annul Biden's victory in the state. A judge is letting Ward's lawyers and experts compare the signatures on 100 mail-in ballot envelopes with signatures on file to determine whether there were any irregularities. Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs' office, which certified Arizona's election results on Monday, said there was no factual basis for conducting such a review.

Death & Funeral Announcement

In Celebration of Her New Life

ANTONIA SABLAN PALACIOS CORRAL

"Nanko/Toni"

Born on December 28, 1950 and called to her eternal rest on November 29, 2020 in Scottsdale, AZ

Survived by:

Husband: Jay J. Corral

Children:

Glen D. Palacios & Latii Shmull Palacios (Kebekol & Dee Shmull; Adam Palacios; Joseph Palacios – Carter; Anthony Palacios; Ashlee Palacios; and Jessie Jade Palacios)
Jesse S. Palacios & Mylyn J. Palacios (Tricia Palacios, Layla Palacios, and Jesse Palacios, Jr.)
Layla Palacios Corral & Adam Mendoza
Sheila Palacios Camacho-Stevens & Audie Stevens (Peyton, Shohna, Keoni)

Brother, Sisters, and In-laws

Jesusa Palacios Iglesias & Joaquin M. Iglesias and family
Darlene Palacios Macaranas and family
David S. Palacios & Margaret M. Palacios and family
Ann S. Palacios & Adam Mazon and Darlene S. Palacios
Patricia T. Palacios and family
Lydia R. Palacios and family
Richard & Lois Corral and family
Ernie Corral and family
Alex & Elizabeth Corral and family
Leah Gray and family
Sarah & Robert Arnold and family
Cathy Corral and family

Pre-deceased by:

Father: Jesus M. Palacios
Mother: Anuncia S. Palacios
Fathers-in-law: Jesus Corral
Juan Martin
Mother-in-law: Guadalupe Martin
Brothers: Roman S. Palacios
George S. Palacios
Sister: Rita S. Palacios
Brothers-in-law: Richard I. Macaranas
Ronnie Corral

On Saipan, Mass of intention for the repose of her soul is being said daily at 6:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral. Final mass will be said on December 7, 2020 also at 6:00 a.m.

Memorial services will be held at a later date in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Funeral on Saipan will also be announced at a later date.

Your thoughts and prayers are greatly appreciated.
Un Sen Dangkulu Na Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Thank you.

Jay J. Corral, children and family

Asia

FIRST IN 89 DAYS

Vietnam reports local infection

HANOI, Vietnam (AP)—Vietnamese authorities are conducting intensive contact tracing after discovering the country's first confirmed local transmission of the coronavirus in 89 days.

State media said Tuesday that a 32-year-old man in Ho Chi Minh City tested positive for the coronavirus on Monday after visiting a flight attendant who was undergoing self-quarantine at his home following his return from Japan two weeks ago. The flight attendant tested positive on Saturday, the Tuoi Tre newspaper said.

Health authorities ordered 137 people who had been in close contact with the man to stay in a central quarantine facility and shut down an English center where he works as a teacher, the newspaper said.

The new case ended Vietnam's streak of 89 days without any known local transmission of the virus. Earlier, it went 99 days without local transmissions until a cluster of cases broke out at a hospital in Da Nang in central Vietnam in July.

Vietnam's borders remain closed in an attempt to keep out the virus. Only limited international flights are operating to repatriate Vietnamese nationals and transport foreign diplomats and experts.

The country has reported 1,347 coronavirus cases, including 35 deaths. Nearly half of the confirmed cases were imported, according to the Health Ministry.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

■ Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam on Tuesday urged residents to stay home as the city grapples with a resurgence of the coronavirus, which has infected over 500 people in the past week. Lam asked citizens to "refrain from social gatherings" and said that people, in particular the elderly, should remain at home. "The latest wave of the epidemic is rather severe. Every one of us should do our best and exercise a high level of discipline to fight the pandemic," she said at a regular news conference. "The coming two weeks is a crucial period." Many of the new infections in Hong Kong have been tied to dance studios, and outbreaks have also been found among staff and guests at several restaurants. The new wave of infections has led authorities to tighten social distancing restrictions, including closing entertainment venues such as karaoke bars and game centers and limiting public gatherings to two people.

■ Coronavirus quarantine restrictions will continue in the Philippine capital during the Christmas season in Asia's largest Roman Catholic nation. President Rodrigo Duterte said in televised remarks late Monday that the "general community quarantine" will continue during December in Metropolitan Manila and seven other cities and provinces. The restrictions ban large public gatherings, in-person school classes and entertainment businesses, but allow shopping malls, restaurants and essential stores, including barbershops, to operate with required safeguards. Duterte lamented that many people still defy social restrictions such as the use of face masks and warned of a possible resurgence of the virus. "In the Philippines, it's hard-headedness," Duterte said. "Why would it not increase when everybody is going out?" The Philippines has reported more than 431,600 coronavirus infections, the second-highest in Southeast Asia, and at least 8,392 deaths.

Thai leader faces court ruling that could cost him his job

BANGKOK (AP)—Thailand's highest court is set to rule Wednesday on whether Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha has breached ethics clauses in the country's constitution and should be ousted from his position.

The Constitutional Court will rule on a complaint brought by the Pheu Thai Party, the largest opposition grouping in Parliament, that Prayuth has broken the law by continuing to live in his military residence after he retired as army commander in September 2014.

The ruling comes as Prayuth has been dealing with another major headache, a persistent student-led pro-democracy movement that has been holding frequent well-attended rallies demanding that he and his government step down, charging that they came to power illegitimately.

As army commander, Prayuth led a coup in May 2014 that ousted an elected government led by the Pheu Thai Party. He then headed the junta that ruled for five years, and was also prime minister in the military-guided government.

A general election last year brought to power a proxy party established by the military, which with its allies selected Prayuth to serve again as prime minister. The ongoing protests charge that the 2017 constitution established under military rule gave the military's proxy Palang Pracharath Party an unfair advantage in the election.

When Prayuth and several of his Cabinet ministers faced a censure debate in Parliament in February, opposition leader Sompong Amornwiwat of the Pheu Thai Party raised the issue of whether Prayuth had acted illegally by continuing to live at his army residence at a base in Bangkok.

The complaint, which was forwarded to the court, alleges that he broke the constitutional articles barring government ministers from receiving special benefits from state agencies or enterprises because that would amount to a conflict of interest. If a minister is found guilty of violating ethical standards, the official will be disqualified and forced to step down.

Prayuth's defense has been that the official residence of the prime minister is undergoing renovation, and also that he faces security concerns.

The army has argued on his behalf that his military housing is actually a VIP guest house, though critics suggest that if he did not pay at least for water and electricity, he may be breaking the law.

If the court finds Prayuth guilty, he will also be disqualified from holding a government position for two years. His Cabinet will then act as a caretaker government until Parliament can choose a new prime minister and Cabinet.

Prayuth has expressed seeming unconcern about what the verdict might be, telling reporters Tuesday that it was up to the court.

It is conceivable he is tired of the job. As head of his 2014-2019 military government, he had virtually unlimited power and has been irritated by criticism and operating under democratic rules.

World

EU eyes Dec. 29 approval for 1st COVID-19 vaccine

BERLIN (AP)—The European Union drug agency said Tuesday it may need four more weeks to approve its first coronavirus vaccine, even as authorities in the United States and Britain continue to aim for a green light before Christmas.

AP

This May 4, 2020, file photo provided by the University of Maryland School of Medicine, shows the first patient enrolled in Pfizer's COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine clinical trial at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore.

The European Medicines Agency plans to convene a meeting by Dec. 29 to decide if there is enough safety and efficacy data about the vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech for it to be approved. The regulator also said it could decide as early as Jan. 12 whether to approve a rival shot by American pharmaceutical company Moderna Inc, which submitted its request to U.S. and European regulators this week.

If its vaccine is approved, Germany-based BioNTech said the shot's use in Europe could begin before the end of 2020—but that seems quite ambitious, given that the EU Commission usually needs to rubber-stamp the regulator's decision. Still, the agency has also left open the possibility that the date of that meeting will be brought forward if data comes in faster.

Any approval granted by the European regulator will be conditional on companies submitting further information to confirm the vaccine's benefits outweigh the risks.

The date now being eyed would be later than some European countries had hoped. Germany, which has given BioNTech 375 million euros ($450 million) in funding to develop the vaccine, has been preparing to start immunizing people from mid-December onward.

On Tuesday, officials in Germany, France and the Netherlands cautioned that vaccine programs likely won't start until the end of the year.

"With the information we got in recent days we have to assume that approval will only happen around the turn of the year," German Health Minister Jens Spahn said.

"It has moved because some studies obviously need a little longer to be submitted," he said. "What's important is to be prepared."

His comments were echoed by French President Emmanuel Macron and Dutch Health Minister Hugo de Jonge, who said authorities in those countries are working to begin vaccinating people in the first week of January.

"It won't be a vaccination policy for the broader public" during the first few months, Macron said at a news conference.

Dozens of bandits seize Brazilian city, loot bank

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—Dozens of gunmen armed with assault rifles invaded a city in southern Brazil overnight Tuesday and took control of the streets as they assaulted a local bank.

Video broadcast on the Globo television network showed hooded men dressed in black walking the streets of Criciuma in the state of Santa Catarina, and local residents being held hostage during the takeover, which began around midnight and lasted almost two hours. Shots echoed across the city of some 220,000 people.

At least 30 assailants and 10 cars were involved in the well-planned operation, Anselmo Cruz, head of the state police's robbery and kidnapping department, told a news conference, speaking alongside the governor and the mayor. They blocked access to the city—including with burning vehicles—to prevent police reinforcements from responding swiftly, and deployed explosives in the robbery.

The gunmen traded fire with officers in the city center and at a police station, Santa Catarina's military police said on their official Twitter account. Two people were wounded in the firefight: a security guard and a police officer, who was shot in the abdomen and remained hospitalized in serious condition Tuesday.

"It was an unprecedented action for the state. There was never anything with this scope, this violence," Cruz said in a separate interview with Globo News. The television network quoted him as saying the robbers fired bullets with calibers capable of downing a helicopter.

José Damasio was driving home from work around 11:30 p.m. when he passed street sweepers and other municipal employees painting crosswalks. Damasio had no way of knowing they would soon be taken hostage.

"If I had been delayed 20 minutes, just a little later, I would've been screwed," the 27-year-old Damasio told The Associated Press by phone. "I got home and 15 minutes later heard the shots."

Through a window of his home, Damasio said he saw the men firing into the air—with each high-power shot booming like a bomb. He took shelter in a back room with his mother and remained there until the shooting stopped.

Images on Globo showed a bank vault with a square-shaped hole in it and a convoy of criminals' vehicles as they made their escape. Bills were scattered across the ground in one area of the city, and newspaper Folha de S.Paulo reported that police arrested several people who collected 810,000 reais ($150,000) worth of the notes.

Life & Style

'All my love, Elliot': Actor Page comes out as transgender

NEW YORK (AP)—Oscar-nominated actor Elliot Page, the star of "Juno," "Inception" and "The Umbrella Academy," came out as transgender Tuesday in an announcement greeted as a watershed moment for the trans community in Hollywood.

"I love that I am trans. And I love that I am queer," Page said in a statement on social media.

Page, the 33-year-old actor from Nova Scotia, said his decision to come out as trans, which also involved changing his first name, came after a long journey and with much support from the LGBTQ community.

"I can't begin to express how remarkable it feels to finally love who I am enough to pursue my authentic self," Page wrote. "I've been endlessly inspired by so many in the trans community. Thank you for your courage, your generosity and ceaselessly working to make this world a more inclusive and compassionate place."

"The more I hold myself close and fully embrace who I am, the more I dream, the more my heart grows and the more I thrive," added Page, who said his pronouns are "he" and "they."

Page signed his statement with the words, "All my love, Elliot."

The announcement was celebrated widely on social media by LGBTQ rights advocates and many in the film industry. Netflix, maker of the comic book series "The Umbrella Academy," said, "So proud of our superhero! We love you Elliot!"

"Elliot Page has given us fantastic characters on-screen, and has been an outspoken advocate for all LGBTQ people," said Nick Adams, GLAAD's Director of Transgender Media. "He will now be an inspiration to countless trans and non-binary people. All transgender people deserve the chance to be ourselves and to be accepted for who we are. We celebrate the remarkable Elliot Page today."

AP
Elliot Page arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of "The Umbrella Academy" on Feb. 12, 2019.

Page broke out in Jason Reitman's 2007 film "Juno" in a performance as a pregnant teenager that earned him an Academy Award nomination.

Page has frequently worked to bring the lives of LGBTQ characters to screen, including the 2015 film "Freeheld," which he produced and starred in as the partner of a dying New Jersey police detective who had been denied pension benefits.

Last year, he made his directorial debut with the documentary "There's Something in the Water," about environmental damage on Black and First Nations communities in Nova Scotia.

In '76 Days,' a documentary portrait of lockdown in Wuhan

NEW YORK (AP)—"Papa!" screams a hospital worker, covered from head to toe in a Hazmat suit and PPE, in the opening moments of the documentary "76 Days."

This is in the early days of the pandemic in Wuhan, back in January and February when the city of 11 million went into a 2 1/2-month lockdown and hospitals were overrun. The health worker's father has just died, and her agony at not being able to sit by his side is overwhelming. Her colleagues restrain her as she sobs, moaning, "Papa, you'll stay forever in my heart."

"76 Days," shot in four Wuhan hospitals, captures a local horror before it became a global nightmare. Given the constraints at the time on footage and information from Wuhan, it's a rare window into the infancy of the pandemic. The film is directed by the New York-based filmmaker Hao Wu, who worked with two Chinese journalists—one named Weixi Chen, the other is remaining anonymous—to create of a portrait of the virus epicenter.

Some of the images document the fear and confusion of those early days: A group of patients mill outside the hospital doors, pleading to be let in. Others are by now more familiar: Solitary deaths followed by phone calls to family members.

"There has been so much news coverage and commentary about the pandemic but most of that has primarily been about statistics and our political divide," Wu said in an interview. "What I think is missing is the human stories, the human faces of the pandemic."

That may be especially true for stories of the pandemic from China, which President Donald Trump and his supporters have been highly critical of, blaming it for the "Wuhan virus." Wu's film, though, consciously avoids politics to concentrate on the humanity inside the hospitals—even if the workers are so obscured by their Hazmat suits that they're only identifiable by the names penned in sharpie on their backs.

"I feel like right now there is such a toxic background to a lot of the discussions around the virus," Wu says. "The virus is an enemy that doesn't care about your nationality."

"76 Days," which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, is being released Friday by MTV Documentary Films is more than 50 virtual cinemas. Last month, it was nominated for best documentary by the IFP Gotham Awards.

It's among the first in a coming surge of coronavirus documentaries. A handful have already arrived, some—snapshots in an ongoing drama—hurriedly edited even as the scope of the pandemic has continued to expand. In October, Alex Gibney released "Totally Under Control," a two-part indictment of the federal U.S. response to the virus. In August, the artist-activist Ai Weiwei debuted "Coronation," a documentary he directed remotely with dozens of volunteers to capture the lockdown experience for ordinary Chinese people.

For some, the films are too harsh a reminder of an all-consuming reality. But "76 Days" feels like a vital early draft of history. Wu's first instinct had been to create a more straightforwardly journalistic film examining what happened in Wuhan. But Wu—a Chinese native who lives in New York with his partner and two children (he depicted his journey as a gay man in a traditional Chinese family in the 2019 Netflix documentary "All in My Family")—soon recognized the difficulty of access and the rapidly changing situation would make such a film either very difficult or potentially stale by the time it was finished.

Friends are short on sympathy after possible COVID exposure

DEAR ABBY: My husband came down with COVID and has been having a hard time getting over it. When he first started showing the symptoms, I took him to a drive-through medical clinic and got him tested for COVID. The results were negative, so a couple of days later, I carpooled with a friend to another friend's house where seven other friends had gathered. Several days later, when my husband still wasn't improving, I took him to an ER where they did another COVID test. This time it came out positive.

I thought I owed it to whomever I was around at the get-together to tell them about my husband. At this get-together, we all wore masks. We took them off only to eat and then put them back on. It has been more than 14 days since my husband got sick, and although he is not yet over the virus, I haven't come down with it.

I thought my friends would be supportive of me and what my husband is going through. However, I learned from one of these "friends" of more than 20 years that they formed a private Facebook group to discuss how each one has been doing on a daily basis, and I was not invited to participate. I feel betrayed by these paranoid friends. At this point, I don't think I can ever look at any of them the same way. I have been contemplating ending my friendship with all of them. What do you think?

KICKED WHEN DOWN IN OKLAHOMA

DEAR KICKED: I think you should ask the friend who told you about the private Facebook group whether any of the women got sick after that get-together. If the answer is yes, make an appointment and have yourself COVID-tested—twice, if necessary—to ensure that you are not a symptomless carrier. If it turns out that you are positive, tell your friends.

If you test negative, your first priority should be to help your husband get well and protect yourself from getting the virus. As to whether you should end your relationship with these "distanced" friends, from the way they are behaving, it appears they may have ended their relationship with YOU, and for that you have my sympathy.

DEAR ABBY: I recently had my hair dyed by my brother-in-law who is a great hairstylist. I have seen his work on other clients, and he knows what he's doing. I have received a lot of compliments on my new "do."

Problem is, I didn't get what I ASKED for. I was a coward at the time and didn't speak up. Now my roots are starting to show, and I'll be needing a touch-up soon. How do I go about going to another salon for what I want without hurting his feelings or causing hard feelings with my sister-in-law?

COWARD IN KANSAS

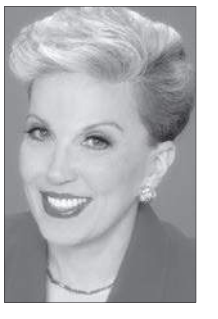
DEAR COWARD IN KANSAS: Make the appointment and have your hair done the way you prefer. If your sister- or brother-in-law asks about it, say you know he is terrific and how busy he is and didn't want to "impose" further. If he's as good as you say he is, he will notice that the color is different from what he used on you.

You're not a coward for wanting to spare your BIL's feelings. You do a disservice to him, however, as a professional for not being truthful about your opinion of his work on you. If he mentions it, explain that this is a color you are more comfortable with. Your head, your choice.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

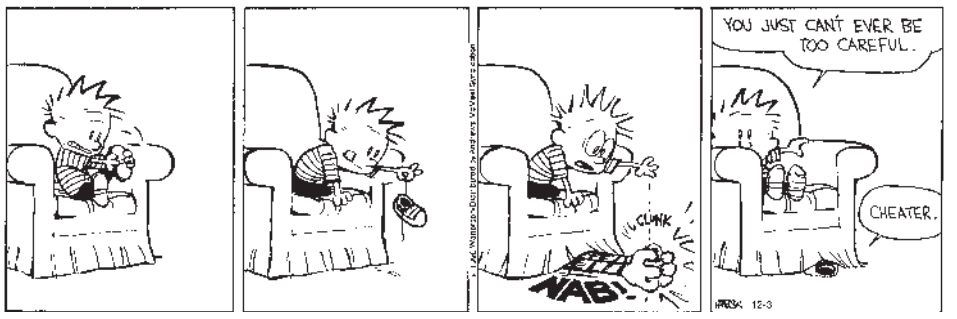


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

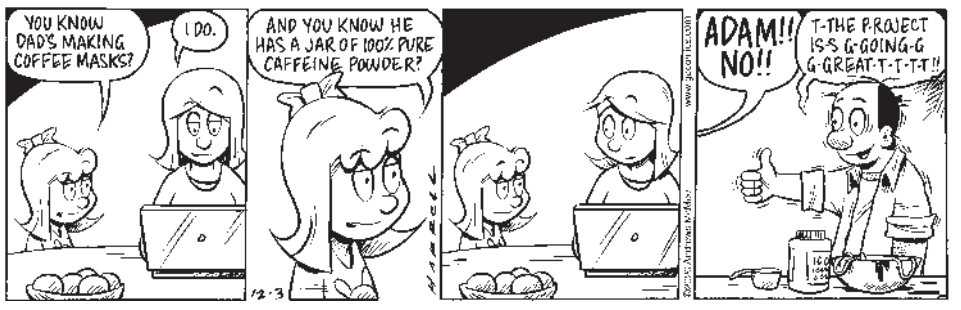


Garfield®

By Jim Davis

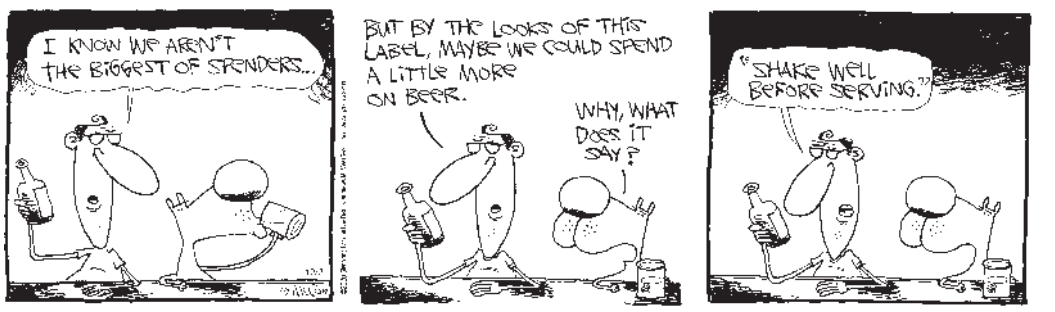
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


YOU KNOW DAD'S MAKING COFFEE MASKS?
I DO.
AND YOU KNOW HE HAS A JAR OF 100% PURE CAFFEINE POWDER?
ADAM!! NO!!
T-THE PROJECT IS-S G-GOING-G G-GREAT-T-T-T-T!!
12-3

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


I KNOW WE AREN'T THE BIGGEST OF SPENDERS...
BUT BY THE LOOKS OF THIS LABEL, MAYBE WE COULD SPEND A LITTLE MORE ON BEER.
WHY, WHAT DOES IT SAY?
"SHAKE WELL BEFORE SERVING."

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

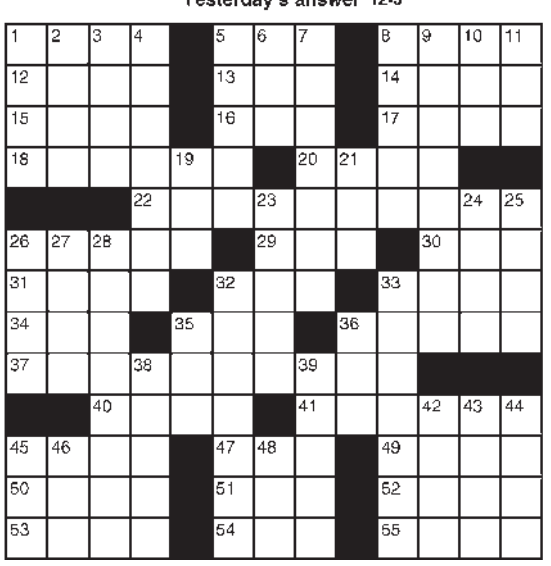
1 Some HDTVs
5 — Lanka
8 Bridge coup
12 Wry Bombeck
13 Witch
14 See to
15 Not worth debating
16 Big bird of Australia
17 Cameo stone
18 Frozen spike
20 "Carmen" solo
22 Ambivalent
26 Relating to Swiss peaks
29 More, to Manuel
30 Caustic solution
31 Ship's frame
32 That man's
33 Suffix for million
34 Motorist's org.
35 Gloomy guy
36 — circle
37 Investor's strategy
40 Noisy
41 Biases
45 Barber's concern
47 Meadow
49 Sleuth Wolfe
50 Formerly, once
51 Chang's brother
52 1982 sci-fi film
53 Transcending (Pref.)
54 Observe
55 Vortex

DOWN

1 Notes after "do"
2 Gator's kin
3 Mine, in Marseille
4 Shoulder bag
5 Bed cover
6 Zodiac animal
7 Tropical lizards
8 Unemotional
9 "Chocolat" actress
10 Whatever
11 1510, in old Rome
19 Chaney of horror films
21 Hwys.
23 Mennonite sect
24 Apollo's instrument
25 Woodland grazer
26 Melville captain
27 Hawaiian feast
28 iTunes selection
32 Gridiron gatherings
33 Slow tempo
35 Wildebeest
36 Under the weather
38 Heart line?
39 Orange variety
42 Dweeb
43 Walked (on)
44 Electronics giant
45 Haw's partner
46 "What — you doing?"
48 Compass dir.

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's answer 12-3



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Amanda Seyfried, 35; Bruno Campos, 47; Holly Marie Combs, 47; Julianne Moore, 60.

Happy Birthday: Conversations that lead nowhere will hold you back. A cut-and-dried approach to what's going on around you and what you want to do will ensure that you reach your goal and build a better future. Learn from the past and forge ahead. Put your energy where it counts, and you will succeed. Choose peace over discord. Your numbers are 6, 11, 19, 28, 36, 38, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Put your thoughts on hold. Now is not the time to share with outsiders or those who don't see things your way. Stay focused on what you are trying to accomplish, and you will make headway. Don't let what others do cause uncertainty. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Show interest in what others do, and you will gain support when you present your pursuits. You will reach a personal goal if you speak up on your own behalf and negotiate positively. An improvement in a meaningful relationship will unfold. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Don't saddle yourself with someone's problems. Offer suggestions, and move on to what you want to achieve today. If you let someone mislead you or come between you and your pursuits, you will have regrets. Put your needs first. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Do your part and make deals. Handle emotional and business matters personally. A joint venture looks promising. A romantic gesture will prompt you to make a change that allows you more time to enjoy life's little pleasures. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Head down the fast track. Engage in activities that inspire you to get fit. Focus more on the things you love to do, and promote better relationships with the people you love. Speak up and do what you do best. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You have more opportunities than you realize. Take a closer look at your options, and distance yourself from people trying to push you in a direction you don't want to go. Live life your way. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Live and learn. The information you receive will change the way you handle personal and professional matters. Refuse to let anyone put you in an awkward position. If you want something, say so, and if you don't, decline. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Focus more on your physical and emotional well-being and less on what's happened in the past. Take action, and get your responsibilities out of the way, then move on to something that inspires and motivates you. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* You'll accomplish the most if you work alone. An activity that will get you up and moving will motivate you to take better care of your health and emotional well-being. Set realistic goals, and you will achieve your expectations. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Do your part, and make a difference. How you deal with others will affect your reputation and encourage a promotion. Your leadership ability will shine through, and good recommendations will follow. Improved partnerships will transpire, and romance is favored. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Don't make changes because someone else does. Follow your heart, and do what's right and best for you. Speak your mind, and make it clear where you stand and what you plan to do. Avoid situations that promote health risks. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Stick to facts, figures and regulations. Pay attention to detail, and negotiate on your behalf. There is money to be made if you do things properly. How you appeal to others will determine the type of assistance you receive. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are passionate, intense and original. You are conscientious and determined.

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	9	2	5		8		
5	2	9			1		
			7	1			
3			8				
1						4	
			4			9	
		8	6				
	8			3	7	2	
	4		1	2	5		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/03

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	2	1	3	9	6	8	5	7
5	9	8	4	7	1	6	2	3
3	6	7	8	5	2	4	9	1
1	5	9	6	2	4	3	7	8
6	8	3	9	1	7	2	4	5
2	7	4	5	3	8	9	1	6
7	1	6	2	4	3	5	8	9
8	4	5	1	6	9	7	3	2
9	3	2	7	8	5	1	6	4

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

SEAN CONNERY (1930-2020) Solution: 12 letters

D	D	M	T	N	E	M	P	A	R	T	N	E	G	F
D	O	E	I	I	E	N	U	R	B	E	U	Q	O	R
R	I	A	T	C	G	S	T	R	A	W	U	U	L	E
I	U	A	N	H	H	E	B	L	O	T	N	E	D	B
L	N	S	M	A	G	E	R	R	H	T	R	M	F	O
L	T	F	S	O	I	I	L	U	A	O	A	I	I	T
I	O	N	O	I	N	D	N	I	C	R	C	C	N	C
B	U	V	U	R	A	D	N	K	N	A	T	H	G	O
R	C	C	E	H	E	B	S	I	I	E	I	A	E	D
O	H	U	O	R	R	V	E	N	I	S	O	E	R	E
C	A	B	B	I	E	V	E	F	E	N	N	L	J	R
C	B	A	D	R	N	O	F	R	R	O	T	C	A	Ⓑ
O	L	G	J	O	S	E	P	H	J	A	M	E	S	Ⓞ
L	E	C	I	W	T	E	V	I	L	Y	L	N	O	Ⓝ
I	S	T	H	O	M	A	S	C	O	T	L	A	N	Ⓓ

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Action, Actor, Bill, Bond, Broccoli, Caine, Cuba, Diamonds, Dr. No, Effie, Entrapment, Forever, Fountainbridge, Goldfinger, Hunt, Indiana, James, Jason, Joseph, Knighted, Love, Marnie, Michael, Micheline, Only Live Twice, Red October, Rock, Roquebrune, Russia, Scotland, Straw, Thomas, Thunderball, Tiger, Untouchables, World.

Yesterday's Answer: Pulp

Treasuries 13 through 18 and 20 through 38 can be purchased online in time for the holidays at WonderWordBooks.com or call 1-800-642-6480.

Lakers vs Mavs to highlight Christmas games

CALIFORNIA—With the NBA season slated to tip off just days before Christmas, the league has put together its traditional holiday schedule packed with games all Christmas Day, according to ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski.

The five-game slate will feature many of the league's best teams and biggest stars while providing early looks at some of basketball's most-anticipated revamped lineups.

The New Orleans Pelicans will tip the day off against the Miami Heat with a rebuilt roster around Zion Williamson and Brandon Ingram that will now feature Eric Bledsoe and George Hill after a November trade with the Milwaukee Bucks.

That trade sent Jrue Holiday to the Milwaukee Bucks, where he will line up alongside Giannis Antetokounmpo to take on the Golden State Warriors and lottery pick James Wiseman in the second game of the day.

The third game on Christmas will provide an early look at the long-anticipated debut of Kevin Durant alongside Kyrie Irving in a Brooklyn Nets uniform. The game will act as a homecoming of sorts for Irving against his former teammates in a road matchup with the Boston Celtics.

The fourth game will feature a pair of MVP favorites in Luka Doncic and LeBron James when the Dallas Mavericks visit the champion Los Angeles Lakers.

The nightcap will provide a rematch of the Denver Nuggets' stunning second-round playoff upset of the Los Angeles Clippers.

If it seems like the 2019-20 NBA season just ended, it's because it did. The NBA's doing a good job of drumming up interest in a new season with an exciting slate of Christmas Day games.

AP

In this Jan. 10, 2020 file photo, Dallas Mavericks forward Luka Doncic (77) drives against Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James (23) during the second half of an NBA game in Dallas.

Camps open amid players testing positive

The first day of NBA training camp is supposed to be accompanied by brimming optimism, a time for players and coaches all taking those first steps toward what they hope is a championship.

It was tempered this year.

The first preseason camps of the coronavirus era opened Tuesday, with teams limited for the first few days to individual sessions with one coach and one player at one basket, all of this starting to happen as the pandemic continues raging and more and more Americans are testing positive—including at least three NBA players in recent days.

"I'm very concerned if we can pull this off," Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers said.

He probably isn't alone.

Golden State general manager Bob Myers said two Warriors have tested positive, meaning that club won't start individual workouts until Wednesday and won't have a full-scale practice until Monday. Washington coach Scott Brooks said the Wizards have one player who tested positive. And Orlando coach Steve Clifford said Magic center Mo Bamba — who tested positive several months ago—is still "a ways away" from being ready to play again.

"I don't think this is unexpected," Myers said. "Kind of proves that the protocols and testing are working. ... That's all per NBA protocols, which I'm learning a lot about."

Rivers, noting how the virus is becoming a major issue for college football and the NFL in terms of getting games played, said the effect on an NBA team losing a key player or two for even a short period could essentially wreck a season.

"In football they play once a week and they have 1,000 players, so when you miss three or four players, you can still get away with it," Rivers said. "If we miss three or four players, we're in trouble, especially with the amount of games. We're playing three and four games a week. So, if one of our guys or two of our key guys get the virus and they miss 10 days, 14 days, that can be eight games in a 72-game season. That can knock you out in the playoffs."

The Wizards didn't say which player tested positive, though Brooks said the player has yet to be around the team in Washington and that "everybody else is ready to go." The Warriors also didn't reveal who had positive tests, citing league rules and privacy policies. Bamba was diagnosed with COVID-19 on June 11, played sparingly in Orlando's first two games at Walt Disney World during the NBA's restart there this summer, then sat out the rest of the season for additional testing.

Players and coaches are being tested daily and that is likely to be the plan for throughout the season. Protocols that the league sent to teams late last week suggested that, in many cases, it would take at least 12 days for a player to be able to return to play after testing positive for the coronavirus.

The league had no positive tests once players entered the restart bubble over the summer. But now back in the real world, with travel and hotels and airplanes back in the mix, San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said the challenge will fall on individuals to do the right things.

"Here, people are coming in and out, it'll be much more difficult and the discipline will have to be even greater," Popovich said. "But I think the understanding is, to make it work, we have an even greater responsibility than we had in Orlando. The league made it easy for us in Orlando, in my opinion, and as we all know did a great job. But here, a lot more of the onus is on individuals and teams."

Some teams will be able to start those group practices —and 5-on-5 sessions— Friday. Most other NBA clubs will be able to start Sunday. Injuries will be a worry, as will conditioning, but the daily testing numbers seem like they'll overshadow everything. ***(AP/NBC)***

Durant unsure what to expect as return nears

NEW YORK (AP)—Kevin Durant used to worry about how he would play.

There hasn't been reason for concern for years. He became an NBA MVP and a two-time champion, an explosive scorer who could get 25 points on a bad night and 45 on a good one.

But that was before having one of the most serious injuries a basketball player could face. Now, 18 months after rupturing his Achilles tendon and finally set to play for the Brooklyn Nets, Durant once again has reason to wonder if he will be one of the league's greatest players.

"Who knows?" he said Tuesday. "I've just got to see how I feel in a real NBA game again."

He hasn't played in one since Game 5 of the 2019 NBA Finals, when he went down early in the second quarter of his last appearance for Golden State. Surgery followed and then shortly after he decided to join the Nets along with friend and fellow superstar Kyrie Irving.

With that duo plus a deep and talented roster, the Nets have a chance to be one of the NBA's top teams. But that may depend on how quickly —or if—Durant regains his form.

Few players have bettered it. The 6-foot-10 forward is a four-time scoring champion who has averaged 27 points, easing whatever fears he had earlier in his career.

"I definitely used to have crazy anxiety wondering how I was going to play the next day or the next series and it used to drive me crazy," Durant said.

He got over that by relying on his work ethic and he believes that will help him overcome the uncertainty he faces now. Nets officials have praised the way he attacked his rehab and it seems clear that if Durant does struggle, it won't be because he wasn't prepared.

Instead, it will be because he's a 32-year-old coming off an injury from which some players much younger have never fully recovered.

"I've been through surgeries and injuries before, but the longest recovery I had was three months," Durant said. "But the first phase of the Achilles, I couldn't walk or run. You had to use a scooter.

"So I think those milestones of reaching, like learning how to walk, learning how to run, jump again and getting used to certain movements again, I think that's underestimated."

Irving thought Durant was perhaps rushed back from his last injury, when he missed nine games during the 2019 postseason and then suffered the Achilles injury the night he returned. This time Durant has had more time than expected because of the coronavirus-interrupted NBA schedule, but the Nets still want to make sure he isn't overdoing it.

"Kevin's done everything you could have ever asked to put himself in this position," new coach Steve Nash said. "He is truly a gift for all of us with not only his talent but his love for the game and the joy he brings in the building every day. Perhaps we have to protect him from himself in a way because he brings so much joy and passion to the sport. He's so eager and hungry after such a long layoff in his prime."

Durant said he's been doing every individual drill as hard as he can. Soon will come team workouts and eventually two preseason games to get himself ready for a season that opens in three weeks.

Only then will he start to get some answers.

"We're going to see how I feel going forward, but I'm excited about the first day and putting on my practice jersey again," he said. "It was a cool feeling today. We'll see how I feel tomorrow."

Mets sign May to bolster bullpen

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Mets reached their first agreement with a free agent since Steve Cohen bought the team, a deal with 31-year-old right-hander Trevor May, a person familiar with the negotiations said.

May had a 3.86 ERA in 24 relief appearances for the Minnesota Twins last season, striking out 38 and walking seven in 23 1/3 innings while allowing 20 hits with a career-high fastball velocity averaging 96.66 mph. He earned $816,667 in prorated pay from a salary of $2,205,000.

May had spent all six big league seasons with the Twins, going 23-21 with a 4.44 ERA in 26 starts and 189 relief appearances.

He made 16 starts in 2015, going 8-9 with a 4.00 ERA over 48 appearances. May had Tommy John surgery on March 22, 2017, and returned to the major leagues on July 31, 2018.

May figures to join a bullpen that includes Edwin Díaz, Jeurys Familia, Chasen Shreve, Miguel Castro, Dellin Betances and Brad Brach, along with fellow newcomers Jacob Barnes and Nick Tropeano.

Mets relievers tied for 18th in the majors with a 4.60 ERA last season and the team had seven blown saves in 18 chances.

New York's front office is being run by Sandy Alderson, who returned to the Mets as team president last month on the day Cohen completed his $2.42 billion purchase from the Wilpon and Katz families.

Red Sox eyeing Kluber

Pitching is a priority for the Boston Red Sox this offseason, and it appears they've been doing their due diligence.

The Red Sox are showing interest in veteran right-hander Corey Kluber, according to Jon Morosi of MLB Network. Kluber, 34, is an unrestricted free agent.

Kluber was traded by the Cleveland Indians to the Texas Rangers in December of 2019. The two-time Cy Young award winner pitched only one inning for Texas in 2020 before suffering a season-ending shoulder injury.

A deal for Kluber undoubtedly would come with some risk, as he's only been able to make eight starts in the last two seasons due to injuries. But in his last full season (2018), he was his usual dominant self, going 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA and a third-place finish in American League Cy Young voting. As long as he's healthy, Kluber would bring a much-needed presence to the top of Boston's rotation.

Currently, the Red Sox's starting staff consists of Eduardo Rodriguez, Nathan Eovaldi, Tanner Houck and Nick Pivetta. Chris Sale is still recovering from Tommy John surgery.

Nats can't afford Bryant and LeMahieu

This offseason, two of the biggest names linked to the Washington Nationals have been Kris Bryant and DJ LeMahieu. However, according to The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal, neither will be in D.C. when the 2021 season begins.

"According to a source, Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo is scheduled to speak with team ownership on Tuesday. The discussion is expected to provide Rizzo with greater clarity on the club's payroll for 2021, but the Nats remain unlikely to be a major player for a big-ticket item such as Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant or free-agent infielder DJ LeMahieu, sources say," Rosenthal wrote in his latest column.

Bryant is still in a contract with the Chicago Cubs, but as they continue to evaluate their future, the star third baseman has been connected to a Washington team with a hole at his position. LeMahieu is one of the top free agents on the market and would provide the Nationals with a much-needed consistent bat in the lineup.

Despite both players having the potential to improve the team, Rosenthal noted that the Nationals may not have the resources to make the moves possible. Both players will require high prices, with LeMahieu commanding a large contract in free agency and Bryant being owed around $20 million for what could become a one-year rental.

The Nationals cannot afford to commit to a Bryant or LeMahieu while trying to fill so many other holes, making less expensive options more viable.

AP

In this Sept. 25, 2020 file photo, Minnesota Twins relief pitcher Trevor May throws against the Cincinnati Reds in an MLB game in Minneapolis.

Women's team, US Soccer settle part of lawsuit

NEW YORK (AP)—Players of the U.S. women's national team and the U.S. Soccer Federation settled their long-running lawsuit over inequitable working conditions compared with the men's team while leaving their dispute over unequal pay for additional litigation.

The parties filed a redacted public notice of the settlement with the federal court in Los Angeles on Tuesday while providing the complete agreement to U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner. The deal with the world champion American women and the sport's U.S. governing body calls for charter flights, hotel accommodations, venue selection and professional staff support equitable to that of the men's national team.

"I hope that the women and their lawyers see that we are taking a new approach," said Cindy Parlow Cone, a former player who became the first female USSF president in March.

"We want the women's team as well as their lawyers to see that we want to move in a different direction," Parlow Cone said. "We want to have a different relationship with them. We want to work together. And I think they're starting to see that. And we have to continue down this path."

Players sued the USSF in March 2019 claiming they have not been paid equitably under their collective bargaining agreement that runs through December 2021, compared to what the men's team receives under its agreement that expired in December 2018. The women asked for more than $66 million in damages under the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Klausner dismissed the pay claim in May, ruling the women rejected a pay-to-play structure similar to the one in the men's agreement and accepted greater base salaries and benefits than the men, who failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

But Klausner allowed aspects of their allegations of discriminatory working conditions to be put to trial, which had been scheduled for next month. With those issues settled, the players may now ask the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to restore the wage claims.

"We are pleased that the USWNT players have fought for — and achieved — long overdue equal working conditions," players' spokeswoman Molly Levinson said. "We now intend to file our appeal to the court's decision, which does not account for the central fact in this case that women players have been paid at lesser rates than men who do the same job.

"We remain as committed as ever to our work to achieve the equal pay that we legally deserve. Our focus is on the future and ensuring we leave the game a better place for the next generation of women who will play for this team and this country.

The lawsuit got international attention. Following the U.S. victory in last year's World Cup final in Lyon, France, the crowd chanted "Equal Pay!" as players celebrated on the field.

In May, then-presidential candidate Joe Biden posted to Twitter: "To @USWNT: don't give up this fight. This is not over yet. To @ussoccer: equal pay, now. Or else when I'm president, you can go elsewhere for World Cup funding," referring to the 2026 men's World Cup, set to be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

While the World Cup bid has no government funding, security assistance is likely to be provided at some level for the games and training venues for the 2026 tournament.

After the USSF argued in court documents that women lacked the skills and responsibilities of their male counterparts, sponsors criticized the federation. Federation President Carlos Cordeiro resigned in March and was replaced by Parlow Cone until the regular election for a four-year term in 2022.

Parlow Cone said she hopes the agreement leads to settlement of remaining issues.

"The players' association shares the plaintiffs' satisfaction that long unequal working conditions will be equal going forward," the women's union said in a statement. "The PA also shares the plaintiffs' commitment to achieving equal pay for equal work and to making soccer better for the next generation of players."

The USSF agreed to provide equal resources to both the men's and women's teams for chartered flights. The federation also will maintain comparable budgets for accommodations and ensure the women stay in top-quality hotels. Will Wilson, who started as USSF CEO in March, said working conditions of the women will be equal to those of the next labor contract with the men.

USSF will ensure that playing surfaces and venues for women's matches under its control will be similar to those of the men, an issue that arose when the women refused to play a 2015 exhibition against Trinidad and Tobago on artificial turf in Honolulu. FIFA scheduled the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada on artificial turf but the men's World Cup has been played exclusively on grass.

The federation will provide equal support staffs to both the men's and women's teams.

Aussie Open to start on Feb. 8, players to train in quarantin

MELBOURNE—The start of the Australian Open will be delayed until Feb. 8 because of coronavirus prevention measures, a newspaper reported, as negotiations on players' arrival and quarantine in Melbourne continued on Wednesday.

International players would be allowed by the Victoria state government to arrive from Jan. 15-17, according to detailed plans seen by French sports daily L'Equipe, meaning the first Grand Slam of the year will be delayed by three weeks.

The proposals would allow players to train during a mandatory 14-day quarantine period.

Tennis Australia would not comment on the report on Wednesday, which came a day after CEO Craig Tiley said arrangements for the tournament, originally scheduled for Jan. 18-31, would be revealed soon.

"We are confident we will be in a position to finalize details for the Australian Open 2021 very soon," Tiley tweeted Tuesday.

"Everything will require approval and agreement from the Victorian government before it can be confirmed," he added.

Tiley had originally wanted players to fly in from mid-December so they could undergo quarantine before playing traditional warm-up events before the Grand Slam.

AP

In this Jan. 26, 2020 file photo, Coco Gauff of the United States returns to compatriot Sofia Kenin in her fourth-round match at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne.

But state premier Dan Andrews reportedly only wants players to arrive from early January—making it impossible to play the build-up events before the original start date.

Andrews said Wednesday he remained committed to holding the tournament, but safety was paramount in a state that only recently emerged from a months-long lockdown to eliminate a second wave of the COVID-19 virus.

"Only the Australian Open is a tennis tournament in a city where it can likely be assumed that those players will bring the virus here," he told reporters in Melbourne.

A Feb. 8 start date for the Australian Open could allow for a week of warm-up tournaments after the players emerge from quarantine, but would likely mean the men's flagship ATP Cup would be among the build-up events that have to be scrapped in 2021.

Twenty-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal last month said it was an unprecedented situation and urged patience from players as they awaited confirmation of when they might be able to travel to Australia.

"That is difficult for everyone," he said at the ATP Finals in London. "We need to be flexible to understand the situation and to find a way to play as many tournaments as possible next year.

Players earlier said they will skip the Australian Open if they are not allowed to practice during their mandatory two-week quarantine due to the risk of injury, Daniel Vallverdu, who has coached some of the biggest names on the ATP Tour, said.

Vallverdu, who currently works with three-times Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka, said TA had previously assured players they would be able to practice.

"Obviously that would be the only way that it would work for the players if they're allowed to practice," the 34-year-old Venezuelan, who has also worked with Grand Slam champions Andy Murray and Juan Martin del Potro, said from Monaco.

"Because they wouldn't be able to just sit in a hotel room for two weeks and then start and play five sets in a Grand Slam. It's just impossible physically, the risk of injury is too high.

"The only way that the players will go to Australia is if they're fully allowed to practice during those two weeks."

Due to border restrictions between states and varied quarantine requirements by local governments, TA also plans to shift all build-up tournaments leading to the Grand Slam to Victoria, which has not reported a locally-acquired case of novel coronavirus infection for over a month.

Organizers of this year's U.S. and French Opens established bio-secure 'bubbles' for players, who were not allowed to leave their hotel rooms except to train and play.

"It's not about the fact whether they can't cope with two weeks of quarantine like many people have done," Vallverdu said by telephone. "I'm sure they can do it, but it's more about the preparation for the Australian Open. ***(AP/NBC)***

SHANE

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Ray Yumul (31 points), and Charles Cepeda (19 points) were the other entries in the division with the latter choosing not to race in the second heat.

In the novice open division, Pangelinan's son, Corry, prevailed in both heats to win against four other riders.

Kier Agda (44 points) and Byron Castro (40 points) joined Corry in the podium, while Sus Santos and Thomas Reyes were the other competitors in the division, but only completed Heat 1.

Last weekend's races were supported by Mobil Marianas, 4Ever CNMI, Angelito Hernaez of Lucals Oils, Esther Camacho, Pacific Trading, Corp., and IT&E.

JOSEPH CHIN

Spectators watch Corry Pangelinan jump during the novice open race.

JOSEPH CHIN

Shane Alvarez, right, leads Heat 2 of the expert open division race in the Marianas Racing Association event last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

TSUNAMI

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ming in official meet because they only started swimming after the Marpi pool close. However, they are doing really well and giving our next generation of swimmers a bright future," Kimura said.

Another swimmer who has yet to compete in an official meet, but has proven that she belongs to the pool is 8-year-old Shana Barman. The youngest participant in last month's time trial got a BB time in the 50m backstroke.

Meanwhile, Tsunami Saipan's top-level swimmers—Suzuki, Aleksenko, Pajarillaga, and Tenorio— are living up to expectations as they keep on showing steady performances during practices and the team trials.

"They are steadily gaining strength," Kimura said." All were medalists in the first Micronesian Swimming Championships held last year in Palau."

The Tsunami Saipan coach added that Tenorio's times in three backstroke events (trials) when converted into the 50m, 100, and 200m could earn him CNMI national records (national marks are only considered official when done in a standard 50-meter pool).

"He's amazing. In 2014, Kensuke Kimura marked three CNMI nationals record in backstroke during the Oceania Championships in New Zealand. At that time, Kensuke was 18 years old. Juhn is still 16 and hopefully has chances to update the CNMI national marks," Kimura said.

Tsunami Saipan swimmers will continue to train amid the pandemic and the lack of a standard pool, but they are hoping to compete in an official meet when it is safe to do so. The club's every practice session is limited to 12 swimmers in observance of the social distancing rule and other safety precautions against the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan members wear masks while doing land-based training drills.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Juhn Tenorio, right, finishes ahead of his teammate during a training session.

Lakers vs Mavs to highlight Christmas games

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Tsunami Saipan swimmers continue progress

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan members are beating the odds, as they continue to show significant improvements at these trying times.

Left without a standard pool for practice since the closure of the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in October 2018, Tsunami Saipan swimmers train at a private facility in small groups and limited time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite these challenges, Tsunami Saipan head coach Hiro Kimura said they are proud of what their swimmers have accomplished, particularly the impressive marks they set in a recent time trial.

Kimura said several Tsunami Saipan members recorded outstanding times in their respective events. The club practices in private pool that measures about 19 meters and Kimura converted their times in U.S. standard mark based on a 50-meter pool to determine their progress.

Twelve-year-old Kouki Watanabe is among the swimmers that have shown great improvement in the past months. Also on the list of Tsunami Saipan's notable members are Kaya Braxton, Maria Guerrero, Richard Zhao, Sharma Barman, Juhn Tenorio, Jinnosuke Suzuki, Isaiah Aleksenko, and Kean Pajarillaga.

Watanabe, according to Kimura, marked AAA times in 50m and 100m breaststroke, while the 10-year-old Braxton has earned BB times in eight events. The 9-year-old Guerrero has accomplished BB times in seven events, while 10-year-old Richard Zhao got the same standard in six events.

"Maria and Richard does not have experience in swim-

See TSUNAMI on Page 19

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan members pose for a photo before resuming their training session at a Navy Hill pool.

Shane nips Cuki in MRA races

JOSEPH CHIN
Cuki, left, and Shane Alvarez are in a tight race during Heat 2 of the expert open division contest in the Marianas Racing Association event last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The expert open division competition in the Marianas Racing Association's event last Sunday turned out to be a father-and-son showdown with Shane Alvarez nosing out his dad, Cuki.

The older Alvarez drew first blood in last weekend's races at the Kan Pacific grounds, as he won Heat 1 (forward course). Shane was ranked second and was followed by Melvin Cepeda, Kiko Santos, and Patrick Togawa.

The Alvarezes returned to the racetrack along with Cepeda (Togawa and Santos passed up on the second heat), but this time they took on the reverse course for Heat 2 with Shane edging out Cuki in the battle for first place.

With the father-and-son duo splitting top honors in the two heats, Cuki and Shane ended up with 47 points apiece. The winner of each heat received 25 points, while the runner-up got 22. To break the tie, MRA, based on its rules, referred to the results of Heat 2, giving Shane the victory.

Meanwhile, Steve Sablan also saved the best for last when he ruled Heat 2 to prevail in the veterans over 45 division races.

Sablan earned 25 points for his first place finish in the second heat and adding the 22 he scored for getting the No. 2 rankings on Heat 2, he won by only 2 points against Glenn Pangelinan, 47-45. Pangelinan reigned supreme on Heat 1 for his 25 points, but was relegated to second place overall after dropping to third on Heat 2 and gaining only 20 points.

Melvin Cepeda rounded out the Top 3 rankings in the veterans over 45 division after collecting 42 points from his third place on Heat 1 (20) and runner-up on Heat 2 (22). Dave Burger (34 points),

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JOSEPH CHIN
Steve Sablan clears a hill during the veterans 45 and over division race.